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Revelating Hicksites and Prophesying Seventh-day Adventists: Individual Religious Experiences and Community Ethics in Antebellum America

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Revelating Hicksites and Prophesying Seventh-day Adventists: Individual Religious Experiences and Community Ethics in Antebellum America

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Revelating Hicksites and Prophesying Seventh-day Adventists: Individual Religious Experiences and Community Ethics in Antebellum America

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Historians of antebellum America have focused on shifting social patterns caused by trends such as democratization and proto-industrialization to explain the rise of new religious communities. These studies, however, have overlooked the ways that the members of these new groups and their visionary leaders understood their goals—in particular their desire to develop new ethical systems from the religious experiences of their founders. My study combines more traditional historical understandings of community formation in antebellum American with methods employed by scholars of religion to provide a clearer picture of the development of unique groups during this era of increased religious diversity. In particular, I argue that scholars must employ both Ann Taves' and William James' methods to study visions and revelations to comprehend how communities addressed the problem of religious experiences' interiority through communal processes of evaluation. To that end, I investigate Elias Hicks, founder of Hicksite Quakerism, and Ellen G. White, the founder of Seventh-day Adventism.

My work on Hicks and White focuses on the processes by which their visionary ethics were transmitted into and practiced by their communities over time. Taken

together, their ministries demonstrate that the visions of founders typically spoke to ethical issues—broadly and narrowly construed. Both leaders addressed personal, interpersonal, and social ills, and they each presented themselves as the model of obedience to their own visions and revelations in their autobiographies. Yet they faced different issues in convincing people of the truth of their visions for their communities. All Quakers expected their ministers to receive revelations during worship, so Hicks only had to persuade them that following revelation over scripture represented true Quaker orthodoxy. Sabbatarian Adventists, however, came from a wide variety of denominational backgrounds, so White had to persuade some of them not only to accept her teachings, but the existence of visions in the first place. Ultimately, their different views of the trajectory of history influenced their lasting legacies to their communities: eventually Hicks' specific teachings fell out of favor among Hicksites who maintained only his commitment to continuing, progressive revelation. White's teachings, however, remain both influential and hotly contested, because her reputation as prophet is bound up in Adventists' belief in the end of days.

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Chapter One: The Historical Problem of Religious Experience

The trances of Socrates, the 'union' of Plotinus, the vision of Porphyry, the conversion of Paul, the aurora of Behmen, the convulsions of George Fox and his Quakers, the illumination of Swedenborg…The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist; the opening of the internal sense of the World in the language of the New Jerusalem Church; the revival or the Calvinistic churches; the experiences of the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder or awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul.[1]
Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841

In 1798, on one of his frequent journeys, Elias Hicks, founder of Hicksite Quakerism, worshipped with the meeting of Friends at Pipe Creek, Maryland. As he sat in silent meditation, he found himself unable to staunch the "evil thoughts" that continually arose in his mind. After further contemplation, the Inner Light—the Quaker term for the Holy Spirit—revealed to him that these "lusts" that he felt actually reflected the spiritual "case of too many present." The Light inspired him with a "testimony," or revelation, specially directed to their spiritual struggles, and he spoke to them at length to instruct them about their sins. After the meeting ended, his friends expressed their concern that the other members of their meeting would avoid them. His knowledge of their meetings' sins was so accurate that other Friends accused them of gossip.[2]

In 1860, Ellen G. White, prophet of Seventh-day Adventism, once again wrote to her friend Harriet Smith to chastise her for fomenting discord between Smith's husband

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[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Oversoul," *Emerson's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Joel Porte and Saundra Morris (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 163, 168.
[2] Elias Hicks, *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), 79-80

Uriah and White's husband James. White said that she had seen in a vision that Harriet's gossip was responsible for turning the whole community against James. She told Harriet that God had shown her in a vision that this behavior was sinful. She needed to submit to the visions' discipline, regardless of her personal feelings about the visionary. Even though she was a recognized prophet and visionary, White still struggled to gain the respect and obedience of followers who disliked her or her message.[3]

In addressing the sins of individuals in their faith communities, the revelations and visions of Elias Hicks and Ellen White demonstrated that, among other things, their religious experiences frequently addressed ethical issues. Contemporary thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson had observed a similar phenomenon. Their society was teeming with religious energy, as new religious groups spawned and revivals swept across the United States time and again. The people of this era witnessed the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, along with the creation of the Disciples of Christ, the Oneida community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ Scientist, Mind Cure movements, and spiritualism, among others. As he surveyed the American religious landscape, Emerson observed that all faiths shared "a tendency to enthusiasm," present in the various kinds of ecstatic, embodied experiences of their practitioners. He described these "revelations" as "an influx of the Divine mind into our mind," and to these "brief moments" of faith, he attributed "more reality… than to all other experiences." Ultimately, he thought these revelations resulted in "perceptions of the absolute law" and

[3] Ellen G. White, "To Brother J.N. Andrews and Sister H.N. Smith," PH016, https://egwwritings.org/ (accessed September 8, 2012). I discuss Smith's conflict with the Andrews, Smith, and Stevens families below in Chapter Five.

processes of "moral and mental gain."[4] To him, religious experiences—regardless of time, place or creed—yielded ethical knowledge. Despite the particulars of the historical moment, he believed that in revelation he had uncovered an essential process common to believers, as they sought to uncover the truth.

In keeping with Emerson's observations, Elias Hicks and Ellen White both relied upon a transcendent connection to the divine in their ministries to provide ethical guidance for their communities—a form of "visionary leadership"[5] that focused especially on considerations about how best to live.[6] Their lives reveal stories that engage simultaneously with ethical issues related specifically to antebellum America and to the longer history of Protestant Christianity. On the one hand, Hicks and White advocated various reform activities characteristic of the antebellum era—antislavery and dietary reform, respectively—and both founded new religious groups. On the other hand, they and their communities sought to answer questions posed by Christians across many centuries: to what extent could personal experiences of God be allowed to dictate the belief and practices of others? What role would visions, revelations, and prophecies play in the community of believers? Hicks called upon his connection to the Inner Light, or Holy Spirit to unearth the sins and spiritual needs of each community he visited, and

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[4] Emerson 163, 166, 168-69.

[5] I employ the term "visionary leadership" to refer to leaders who were recognized for their visions, dreams, revelations, or trances. "Visionary" then indicates the visions of these leaders, rather than the colloquial sense of an idealist leader, although this meaning also applies to Hicks and White.

[6] For purposes of this study, I have intentionally left the term "ethics" somewhat open-ended. In general, I designate it to refer broadly to prescriptions about "how to live." This, then, applies to traditional Christian ideas about personal morality and sin, but also includes issues like health, treatment of animals, and prescriptions about how best to organize and run a community. For many Protestants any of these issues could have a moral component to them.

White trusted her frequent visionary testimonies to expose the sins of the people in the Sabbatarian Adventist community.[7]

Taken together, the lives of Hicks and White demonstrate the complexities of key aspects of antebellum American life that are often studied separately—visionary leadership, ethics, and community development. Historians of antebellum religious movements have examined the formation of new communities in the era of the Second Great Awakening by focusing on shifting social patterns caused by trends such as democratization and proto-industrialization. They have approached these transcendent expressions of faith in two ways: by analyzing the relationship of religious experiences and revivals to processes of democratization; and by using historical examples to understand the nature of these spiritual psychological phenomena. Both of these approaches, however, ignore the fundamental relationship between religious experiences and community ethics.[8] While these scholars have uncovered important connections between social mobility and changing patterns of religious association, their studies have neglected longer-term trends in the ways that these communities incorporated their ethical ideals—found not only in holy texts, but also in the visions and revelations of their leaders.

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[7] Scholars frequently use the term "Sabbatarian Adventist" to refer to the group of Adventists during the years prior to the official founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1862. See, for example, Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 27. "Sabbatarian" refers to their belief in the importance of celebrating the Sabbath on the proper day—Saturday. "Adventist" indicates their belief that Christ's return would occur soon.

[8] Scholars like Robert H. Abzug have argued for the connection between religion and reform during the antebellum period. Abzug's work, however, examined loosely bound reform groups, making it difficult to trace the influence of leaders on the entire community. Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Religious experiences have long been important sources for the ethical ideals of faith communities, as revelations provided instruction in a variety of issues about how to live, whether grappling with sin or interacting with others in the world. While sociological and other historical forces certainly played an important role in how antebellum religious groups were formed, the ethical visions of prophetic leaders need to be understood not only in terms of these historical forces but also in the terms by which religious people and their leaders understood them. My study combines more traditional historical understandings of community formation in antebellum American with methods employed by scholars of religion to provide a clearer picture of the development of unique groups during this era of increased religious diversity.[9] To that end, I investigate Elias Hicks, Ellen G. White, and the creation of their communities.

Elias Hicks, a traveling Quaker minister from the 1760s-1820s, believed that Friends—another name for Quakers—should follow the Inner Light, or Holy Spirit, first and foremost—even above the Bible. Despite his emphasis on traditional "Friendly" values, his theological views conflicted with some Quaker leaders, especially in the Philadelphia area, who wanted to be more like Protestant evangelicals. In his many letters and sermons, he argued that the Bible must be interpreted with guidance from the Inner Light, and thus each succeeding generation would receive unique, progressive revelations on the right way to live. In addition, he claimed that submission to these revelations was the key to communal cohesion, which he modeled in describing his early life and

[9] For a discussion of my methodology see below pp. 20-29.

ministerial journeys in his autobiography.[10] Friends around the country appreciated his stand against the attempts of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to impose mandatory creeds, or doctrinal requirements, on them. The ensuing conflict between the Hicksites and the evangelical, or "Orthodox," Friends, who upheld a more literal reading of scripture, resulted in the first major schism in the Society in 1828. Ultimately, Hicks' emphasis on the revelation resulted not in new moral laws for his followers, but in their devotion to revelation itself as the primary conduit of spiritual truth.[11]

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[10] Although his autobiography was not available until after his death, Hicks letters and sermons played an important role in shaping Hicksite theology and often fueled the fires of conflict with Orthodox Friends, when they were published in the 1820s. My study of Hicks relies on his autobiography to understand what his religious experiences were like and draws upon his letters—both published and unpublished—and his sermons to explain how he thought that revelation functioned in communities. Hicks' papers and papers related to the Hicksite Separation have been well preserved, and can be accessed at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College. For examples of the kinds of printed primary sources on which I rely to tell Hicks' story see Elias Hicks, *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009; -------, *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of Elias Hicks* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1832); ------- *Letters of Elias Hicks, including also A Few Short Essays, written on Several Occasions, mostly Illustrative of his Doctrinal Views* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1834); and Marcus T.C. Gould, ed., *The Quaker, Being a Series of Sermons by Members of the Society of Friends*, Vol. I-IV. (Philadelphia: No. 6, North Eighth Street, 1827).

[11] Despite his significance to Quaker history, the life and ideas of Elias Hicks and the Hicksite Separation remain significantly under-represented in Quaker scholarship. The last biography of Hicks was published in the 1950s, and the author, Bliss Forbush, presented a biased interpretation of Hicks as a "liberal" theologian. Bliss Forbush, *Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). Only a few full-length studies of the Separation exist at all, and the most recent study was published in the 1980s. See H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986). Only recently have some Quaker scholars become interested in exploring the Separation and Hicks in greater depth. Most notable among them, Paul Buckley has edited a new version of Hicks' journal and a new compendium of some of Hicks' letters. See Paul Buckley, ed., *Dear Friend: Letters and Essays of Elias Hicks* (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2011) and Hicks, *Journal* (2009). Despite the availability of these sources, most recent work on Hicksites has focused on mapping out the contours of the schism outside of Philadelphia, the locus of Ingle's study or on tracing the history of Hicksites after the Separation. See for example, Christopher Densmore, "From the Hicksites to the Progressive Friends: the Rural Roots of Perfectionism and Social Reform among North American Friends," *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 10, no. 2. (2006): 243-255; Thomas D. Hamm, "The Hicksite Quaker World, 1875-1900," *Quaker History*, vol. 89, no. 2. (2000): 17-41; and -------, "Ministry, Marriage, and Divorce: The Ordeal of Priscilla Hunt Cadwalader," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2008): 407-431.

As a teenager, Ellen G. White believed in William Miller's predictions that Jesus would return on October 22, 1844.[12] After the day of the Great Disappointment when Jesus did not return as anticipated, she had visions that explained the heavenly significance of 1844 to Sabbatarian Adventists, a group of faithful Millerites.[13] As word of her spiritual gifts spread, she gained adherents and had even more visions about various theological issues. Convincing some people that her visions were genuine, however, proved difficult. She argued implicitly for the legitimacy of her visions through her many autobiographical writings that were disseminated to fellow Adventists early in her career as a visionary. In narrating the story of her early visions, White claimed that they were a natural outpouring of her previous religious experience in Millerism, and she demonstrated obedience to her visions.[14] Her campaign to persuade people within her own Sabbatarian Adventist community of her legitimacy also involved moral correction of their individual sins, revealed to her in visions, which she delivered both in face-to-

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[12] In 1844, Ellen White was not yet married to James White, so she went by her maiden name, Ellen Harmon.

[13] William Miller was a former deist who converted to Christianity after participating in the War of 1812. Through careful study of the Bible, he became convinced that he could predict the exact date of Jesus' return, which he believed would be sometime in 1843 or 1844. His followers became convinced that October 22, 1844 was the last possible day for Christ's return. When Jesus did not come, many lost their faith, and the day became known as "the Great Disappointment." David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1985).

[14] In White's case, her autobiography is of particular importance, because it was one of the earliest ways in which she presented herself to the Sabbatarian Adventist community. She wrote the first version of her autobiography in the early 1850s, and it was published in a special edition of the Sabbatarian Adventist periodical, *Sabbath Review & Advent Herald*. White later expanded upon it in an autobiographical work called *Experiences and Views*, which formed first hundred pages of *Life Sketches*, the autobiography cited throughout this chapter. See Ellen G. White, "Experience and Views," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol. II, no. 1, extra* (Paris, Maine, 1851); --------, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851) and -------, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854); and -------, *Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by herself; With a Sketch of her Subsequent Labors and of her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915).

face encounters and in letters written to specific individuals.[15] As church members and leaders became convinced of White's divine gift, her inspired teachings addressed not only individual ethical issues, such as sexuality, greed, etc., but broader social problems, like diet and health reform.[16] Especially in light of their belief in the impending Second Coming, their obedience to the prophet's teachings took on eternal significance.[17]

In sum, the lives of Hicks and White provide great insight into the ways that religious communities developed, because the ministries of each reflect broader ongoing debates about religious experiences in the nineteenth century United States. In addition, both came from religious traditions in which the relationship of the individual to the community and of revelatory experiences to communal belief had been contested for a long time. They approached these historical debates differently, however, because White, unlike Hicks, aspired to create an entirely new community, rather than reform an existing one. In each of their lifetimes, they became embroiled in conflicts over the legitimacy of their visionary experiences that went hand-in-hand with the creation of groups that provided new answers to the question of individual experience and collective belief. Each

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[15] All of White's writings are now available online or at Adventist archives around the country. The manuscript versions of her letters are kept at the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland.

[16] Health had a decidedly moral component to it in White's thinking. Her prophecies explained that living a healthy life was an essential part of godly living, but health was also a part of her vision for how to reform society as a whole. Healing people's bodies would be one step on the way to healing their souls.

[17] Despite the size and influence of Seventh-day Adventism today, very little scholarly work has been written about Ellen White outside of Adventist circles. To the best of my knowledge, no critical scholarly biography of White exists, and most critical scholarship of White has been written by former Adventists, who sought to disprove White's prophecies. See below note page 32, note 57. Notable exceptions to this trend include Ann Taves' chapter on White in her study of nineteenth-century religious experiences, and Laura Vance's study of White's impact on gender roles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), and Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

community grappled with their leaders' teachings, allowing their claims to divine inspiration to influence its development to varying degrees. Finally, comparing lives of Hicks and White requires scholars to reconsider methodological approaches to the study of religious experiences—both in antebellum America and in the longer sweep of American religious history.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

While Hicks and White make good candidates for studying visionary leadership, the antebellum period is an especially important era to explore it. After the Revolutionary War, official churches were disestablished in most states. In this atmosphere of religious freedom, numerous Americans participated in the proliferation of lay-driven denominations like the Baptists and Methodists, and new religious sects emerged regularly. The members of these groups argued among themselves and with each other about the appropriate limits of ecstatic religious experiences and the extent to which they could serve as evidence for faith and provide rules for how to live.[18] At the heart of many of these arguments were prophetic leaders who inspired their followers to accept new teachings based on their visionary status.

As these new prophets appeared in the nineteenth century, questions about belief in religious experiences became more important than ever to Americans. Developments during the eighteenth century, including the Enlightenment, scientific discoveries, the

[18] Myriad volumes have been written about the various new religious movements founded during the nineteenth century. The only study I know to discuss almost all of them in one place is a recent dissertation: David F. Holland, "Continuing Revelation: An idea and its Contexts in Early America," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005).

Industrial Revolution, and changing political structures had all led to an increased focus on observable evidence. In particular, investigations into the earth's history had begun to undermine the Biblical account of the earth's age implied by a literal reading of Genesis.[19] Christians responded to this challenge to scripture variously, but they tended to align themselves in three ways: those who believed in religious experiences in general; those who believed that some form of revelations or visions were useful; and those who opposed all claims to visionary experiences. Both Hicks and White fell roughly into the second group and faced opposition from people in the third.

Some religious thinkers turned to the evidence of the senses for proof of faith. Emerson, for instance, saw revelations from the "Oversoul" as the essential commonality among religious faiths. It was the experience of faith that mattered the most. Friedrich Schleiermacher, a nineteenth-century German theologian, defended religion to its "cultured despisers," the intellectual elite, by positing a generic religious emotion. He argued that outward forms of religion were not as important as religion's essence, which he identified as an a priori sense, feeling, or intuition of the divine. Schleiermacher's ideas became influential among liberal Protestants. Even though Christians had debated the appropriateness of a faith based primarily on interiority in previous eras,

[19] Peter J. Bowler, *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons: Evolution and Christianity from Darwin to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007); Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology: A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology, and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951). Thanks to Angela Smith for helping me to clarify this point.

Schleiermacher, and others like him, raised the stakes by suggesting that evidence for the existence of religion could be found in these experiences alone.[20]

Second, some Protestants, by contrast, emphasized the necessity of identifying proper forms of religious experiences. Presbyterian theologian Archibald Alexander wrote about the importance of distinguishing genuine religious experiences from false. Though he was skeptical of dreams and visions, he thought that religious experiences accessed a part of faith that intellectual belief alone could not.[21] More radically, Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830 based on new revelations from God. He believed not only the possibility of God's renewed intervention in human affairs, but that revelation was a continuous process. He nevertheless limited to himself the ability to receive revelation on behalf of the Mormon Church. For these believers, revelations were not good in themselves but could be helpful as evidence of faith in certain contexts.[22]

Others, however, resisted the impulse to define faith through emotional experiences and insisted on scripture as the sole basis of Christian faith. Along with the rejection of the miraculous, these Protestants believed in a closed canon of scripture. This meant that the Bible, and the Bible alone, could be relied upon to obtain knowledge of the

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[20] William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 5-8; Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[21] Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience, to which is added an appendix containing "Letters to the aged," &c, &c* (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Publication, 1844).

[22] Smith was recognized as "sole revelator" for the church only after conflict with his second-in-command, Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery tried to receive revelation, but he could not. Afterwards, Smith had a revelation in which God said that only he could receive new teaching on behalf of church. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural biography of Mormonism's founder* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 118-121.

truth of God's plan for salvation. They denied those who claimed to have direct access to God and to new revealed truth. Though God had communicated directly with the Apostles, he no longer gave his followers new information about his intentions or their beliefs.[23]

The ministries of Elias Hicks and Ellen White provide an especially relevant view of these antebellum stories—both because of the longer historical problems that their faith traditions faced and because of the conflict that their religious experiences created within their communities. Though he occasionally mocked Methodists and other evangelical worshippers, Hicks, somewhat like Alexander and Smith, believed that some form of religious experience, namely revelation, was necessary for knowledge of God's will. To him, this experience was available to all believers and even trumped scripture, which could only be properly understood through revelation. Hicks' stance on scripture evoked strong opposition from certain Quakers who were increasingly sympathetic to the view that the Bible alone was the source of truth. White also believed in religious experiences, especially prophetic visions. She and her fellow Adventists, however, developed a complex theology in which those visions, at least in theory, were supposed to be subservient to the teachings of scripture.

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[23] By the nineteenth century, the majority of Protestants had accepted the idea of a "limited age of miracles." This meant that miracles had occurred only during the time of Jesus and the Apostles. This view allowed Protestants to distinguish themselves from Catholics, who prayed to saints and expected miracles to occur regularly. It also supported the idea that nature was orderly and operated according to rules. Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Given the history of various antinomian traditions in the history of Christianity in the United States, I argue that there was never a time when all Protestants fully accepted the idea of a limited age of miracles. Nevertheless, Mullin's argument seems to apply to mainstream Protestant denominations, generally speaking.

"Friendly" Revelation

In the cases of both Hicks and White, these debates about the role of revelation in the community had deep roots in the history of their movements, but they faced different challenges in addressing those histories. He only hoped to reform an existing community, and founded a new one almost by accident. She, by contrast, desired to create a new community, and along with it a new orthodoxy, to replace her lost Millerite home.

In the history of the Society of Friends, Quakers have long struggled to balance their teaching that every individual has the capacity for revelation with their desire for communal unity. The Society began with George Fox's first visionary experience in 1652 while walking on Pendle Hill near Clitheroe, England. He was inspired "to sound the day of the Lord."[24] Frustrated by the clamor of competing religious teachers, Fox preached that it was necessary to search for Christ *within*. He thought that direct revelation of Christ through the Inner Light was possible for everyone. Indeed he argued that new revelation was necessary, because God's Spirit was still working in the world to teach new truths.[25]

Quakerism appealed to many believers who had been cast adrift after the tumult of the English Civil War, which ended in 1649. Seekers, Diggers, and some Puritans were drawn to Fox's powerful critique of paid clergy and the certainty of his personal connection to Christ. In its earliest stages, Quakerism was marked by intense worship practices in which Friends, as they came to call each other, gathered together in hopes of

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[24] J. Nickals, *The Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 104 in Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13.
[25] Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 15-16; Dandelion 13-18.

being moved by the Spirit through worship. As they received revelation, they would literally "quake" from the intensity of the feelings associated with the process. They were also known for emotional conversions, a process they called convincement, in which the individual experienced a "powerful in-breaking of God" into his or her heart and mind; became convicted of sin; and resolved to repent.[26]

In the seventeenth century, however, Friends began to rein in their antinomian impulses after an incident involving leading Quaker minister James Nayler. In October 1656, he rode into Bristol on a donkey, as his supporters chanted, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" He claimed that he had been inspired to this act by direct revelation from God, but authorities immediately arrested him for his blasphemous imitation of Christ's ride into Jerusalem. Already in a politically tenuous situation, Fox chose to distance himself, and Friends in general, away from Nayler. Fox had taught that the Bible should not be held in higher esteem than revelation, but this reliance on revelation proved problematic when Nayler's actions went beyond what even Quakers deemed acceptable. By the time of this episode, they had already earned a reputation for their radical worship practices and beliefs. They were accused of being closeted Catholics, witches, and child molesters, among other things, so Fox chose to subvert individual revelation to counteract these

[26] Nikki C. Tousley, "The Experience of Regeneration and Erosion of Certainty in the Theology of Second-Generation Quakers: No Place for Doubt?" MPhil thesis (University of Birmingham, 2003) in Dandelion 23-24.

accusations. He would not allow Nayler's supposed blasphemy further to jeopardize their reputations. Nayler had taken his personal revelation too far.[27]

Importantly, the Nayler incident revealed that some corrections needed to be made to the practice of direct revelation. Leading Friends concluded that they had allowed too much leeway to individuals to decide which revelations were of God, thereby permitting Nayler and his followers to commit an act of apparent blasphemy. They came to the conclusion that the discernment and discretion of other Friends should play a role in judging revelations. Total agreement had to be reached about whether or not something was truly divinely inspired.[28] Additionally, later Quakers began to prohibit other actions that appeared to be blasphemous. They published fewer prophetic writings, especially those of women, and they censored street preaching. They still thought that individual revelation was important, but it had to be tempered with communal judgment. Although revelation remained a central tenet of Quaker belief, they emphasized the Bible more.[29]

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[27] In addition to the cultural and political context, Nayler and Fox had competed for influence among Friends. Nayler's actions allowed Fox to gain the upper hand and put an end to their contest for leadership. Dandelion 41; Hamm 20-21

[28] Quakers as a rule did not seek to govern by taking a vote and allowing the majority to rule. Instead, they would postpone making a decision about something until everyone in a meeting came to a consensus. Hamm 11

[29] Dandelion 42-49; The Society took further steps to claim authority over individual revelation a few years later. In 1666, Fox supported a book called *A Testimony from the Brethren* by Richard Farnworth. Farnworth argued that "the church had the right and responsibility to judge individual inspiration and to deal with those who ignored its authority." This demonstrated Quaker concern with morality and "a further attempt to quell individual dissent." Phyllis Mack also explained that this process occurred among second-generation Quaker female prophets. In order to maintain their autonomy, these women withdrew from public preaching, but along with these changes, the intensity of their religious experiences decreased. Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

Though the Society of Friends mostly managed to subordinate individual revelation to communal discretion, periodic disturbances occurred.[30] In the antebellum era, they yet again disputed the role of individual revelation in their communities. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Friends, especially in urban areas, had become tired of the insularity that had developed in the Society during the eighteenth century. They advocated greater participation in wider Protestant Christendom. Along with this, they sought to reform Quaker doctrine by enforcing evangelical Protestant teachings about the historical Jesus and by requiring Friends to affirm belief in the Bible and in Jesus' divinity. Although many Friends already believed these things, some felt that mandating specific doctrines was contrary to the independence of belief that typified their understanding of historical Quakerism.

In the 1820s, Friends who disapproved of Quaker leaders' attempts to enforce creeds joined forces with Hicks, who argued that scripture could only be interpreted with guidance from the Holy Spirit. Although he had not intended to create a separate community, his views implied possible changes not only to doctrine, but to the functioning of the Society itself. In fact, evangelical Friends worried that this idea of revelation, if left unchecked, would lead to disorder in the Society—the worst of all

[30] Although the Hicksite Separation is considered the first major schism in the Society of Friends, there were at least two previous conflicts that led to smaller schisms prior to the 1820s. George Keith, for instance, initiated a separation in the 1690s, and Hannah Barnard was disowned for views that Friends in the London Yearly Meeting deemed heretical in 1802. For more on both of these schisms see Chapter Two, 78 and Chapter Three 32.

possible outcomes for Quakers.[31] For his part, Hicks hoped that revelation would change the thinking and action of the Quaker community, and he presented himself as the model of submission to the Light in his journal and other writings. In expressing his belief that each generation received new truth from the Holy Spirit, he claimed not only that the meaning of scripture might change over time, but that ethics could and would progress.[32]

VISIONARY ADVENTISM

Whereas Hicks came down on the side that favored experience, White and the Seventh-day Adventists created a community in which new revelations were held in check by scripture. Their movement began in the aftermath of the Millerites' Great Disappointment of 1844. When Miller's prediction that Christ would return failed, White's first vision conveyed to her the "true" meaning of 1844: a momentous event had occurred in heaven on that day that would precipitate Jesus' return.[33] The simplicity of this story, however, obscures the Millerites' complex theological past. Millerites had not been a denominationally unified group; Miller was a Baptist, but his supporters came from almost every Protestant denomination. White was raised in the Methodist Church, and experienced conversion at a Methodist camp meeting in 1840, but her husband and others like him came from denominations that viewed religious experiences less

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[31] Quakers in general sought to have an "orderly" society. By this they meant that that it was important for Friends to follow the rules governing their meeting structure, but it could also refer more expansively to sin. Hamm 23

[32] Dandelion 80-85; H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 3-15.

[33] Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 3ff; Rowe 146

favorably. Debates between those Adventists who supported visions unequivocally and those who did not proved challenging during White's ascent to visionary leadership. [34]

As a Methodist, White grew up in an environment that fostered experiential, emotional religious expressions. Nevertheless, from its beginnings, Methodism walked a fine line between religious enthusiasm and reason. John Wesley's spiritual development exemplifies this problem. After meeting Moravian pietists during an ill-fated mission trip to the American colony of Georgia in the 1730s, John Wesley founded the Fetter Lane Society in London to promote pietist principles. Pietists had reacted to the perceived stagnation of Anglican, Luther, and Reformed Churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by emphasizing a more affective Christian faith. Wesley implemented these beliefs in hopes of reforming the Church of England from within.[35]

Methodists believed in the importance of the many phases of Christian life—conversion, sanctification, and holy death—and Wesley encouraged a certain level of affect among Methodist converts. He was circumspect, however, about individuals' claims to divine inspiration. He tended to doubt people with millenarian predictions or special revelations that contradicted biblical evidence. Powerful religious experiences—even some visions—could serve as evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in an individual's life, as long as that person was considered reliable and did not claim to supersede

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[34] White, *Life Sketches*, 22-24.
[35] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of Spirit* (New Haven, CN and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 11-16; J. Gordon Melton, ed., *American Encyclopedia of Religions* (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 75.

scripture.[36] Thus, he built into Wesleyan practice a check on the extent to which visions and other forms of religious expression were allowed to dictate church belief. Although there were cases of individual Methodists who went beyond Wesley's guidelines for legitimate spiritual experience, his appreciation for spiritual experiences regulated by communal discipline was practiced by other Methodists in general—including those who came to the American colonies.[37]

Ellen White and others like her who were raised in Methodism incorporated its emphasis on personal experience and revelation, tempered by scripture, into Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice. Yet the situation was complicated by the presence of others who came out of groups like the Christian Connexion, including Ellen's husband James. The Christian Connexion was closely related to the movement founded by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone in the early 1800s. Campbellites claimed to have no creeds at all and to follow the Bible alone, and they were very distrustful of enthusiastic religious experiences and visionary claims.[38] As an Adventist, James White came to believe in the

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[36] Hempton points out that Wesley's thought was influenced by Lockean empiricism and belief in "sensationalist psychology"—the idea that the senses served as proof of the external world. He thought that religious experience could serve as evidence of God's work in the individual's life. For instance, the emotional experience of his own conversion proved God's work in his life to him. Hempton 33-41, 49-54.

[37] Methodism came to the American colonies in the 1766, when the Methodists founded the first Methodist Society in Leesburg, Virginia. Through the work of Francis Asbury, it spread throughout the colonies. Even during the American Revolution, they managed to double their size from 6,000 in 1778 to 12,000 in 1782 by preaching to soldiers and to people who traveled with the soldiers. Methodism was central to the revivals of the Second Great Awakening and beyond. It appealed to Americans with its Arminian message of consenting to grace and its emphasis on lay preaching and leadership. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 9-11; Hempton 93; Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[38] James Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

possibility of prophecy, but he and other Adventists struggled to find a place in their theology for a prophet.

Although all Sabbatarian Adventists wanted to keep their faith in the Advent, they did not all agree that visions were biblically permissible. Thus, White faced an uphill battle in convincing early Adventists of the truth of her visions and in enforcing her ethical vision for the community. The consequences of this battle went beyond theology in this case as well: many of her prophecies related to a variety of personal and social moral problems, but her followers would only heed them if convinced of her legitimacy. Ultimately, their belief that the existence of visions signified the coming apocalypse, alongside White's vigorous campaign to discipline, convinced them to follow her.

The lives of White and Hicks reveal that responses to the question of religious experience were more complex than a simple "either/or." They demonstrate that the stakes of the debate were enormous—extending well beyond the particularities of doctrinal dispute. If new revelations were possible, then perhaps a whole new range of communal activities and practices were possible, and realizing these new revealed truths would change the ethical fabric of American society. Yet for all we know about these larger processes and the groups that came from them, our understanding of community dynamics is imperfect in large part because historians have not allowed these communities to speak for themselves about how and why they came together.

HISTORIANS AND ANTEBELLUM RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The dominant historical interpretations of this era have asked whether the religious freedom Americans experienced in the nineteenth century was in fact so freeing.

Nathan Hatch famously argued that the revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were critical to supporting democratic empowerment. He contended that participants cast aside the leadership of trained clergymen in favor of lay preachers who employed a colloquial style with a democratic message and used print culture and new worship techniques to appeal to common people.[39] In response, scholars like Paul E. Johnson and Christine Heyrman claimed that the long-term result of revivals was increased social control, as middle class revivalists attempted to enforce their moral norms, such as temperance, on their workers.[40]

My work on Hicks and White reveals that both of these arguments are accurate to varying degrees, especially in the case of Seventh-day Adventists. Choosing to join a religious community frequently went hand in hand with submission to social control of a kind: to be a part of the group, individuals necessarily gave up certain freedoms to adhere to group standards. New faiths, especially those with visionary leaders, however, appealed to believers because of the possibility of creating these new norms and imagining new ways of living in a community.[41] After all, part of the reason that

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[39] Hatch, *Democratization*

[40] Heyrman, *Southern Cross*; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978, 2004)

[41] For my purposes, my definition of community is more expansive than traditional microhistorical studies that examine one place. Because I am thinking broadly about how they impacted the development of larger faith groups, I employ a wide ranging and perhaps more metaphoric definition of the term. Though Hicks and White found themselves belonging to different kinds of communities throughout their lives, they undoubtedly also understood themselves to belong to a broader faith community, not bound to a specific geographic location, but to bound by spiritual ties. Thomas Tweed, for example, argues that one of religion's important functions is to orient people in time and space, to help them to "dwell" in a place. While this "dwelling" may sometimes refer to a specific time and/or place, it can also enable religious practitioners to "inhabit ever-widening spaces: the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos." Thus, a religious community need not refer to a single geographic area alone. Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: a Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 83.

contemporaries found the prophecies of Joseph Smith, Nat Turner, John Humphrey Noyes, Rebecca Cox Jackson, Mary Baker Eddy and others both invigorating and frightening was that they promised alternate ways of living—ethical systems—that challenged the existing social order.[42] This search—to find a community that lived up to one's ethical and spiritual ideals—has inspired religious believers for millennia and must inform attempts to understand the actions of particular people in particular times and places.

Scholars of religion in the United States have increasingly paid attention to the importance of visions, dreams, revelations, and similar phenomena in the religious and cultural history of the U.S. and have provided useful methodological tools for thinking about them. Yet, in their investigations, they have neglected the connection between ethics and religious experiences. In examining debates between believers and skeptics, Ann Taves and Leigh Eric Schmidt focused primarily on contextualizing those moments

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[42] Joseph Smith's first vision, for example, promised to help him discern the truth in the midst of the competition he saw among the Protestant denominations of New York. Ultimately, his visions led him to *The Book of Mormon* and inspired *The Doctrine and Covenants*—the sacred texts of the Church of Latter-day Saints that guide their ethical, spiritual and theological beliefs to this day. Bushman 35ff. Nat Turner's visions inspired a slave revolt, which sought to change the social and ethical landscape of the U.S. by freeing the slaves and perhaps by speeding Christ's return to earth. James Sidbury, "Reading, Revelation, and Rebellion," *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*, Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129-133. John Humphrey Noyes became convinced of the doctrine of perfection through a kind of visionary experience in which his "spirit heard a voice from heaven." His belief in perfection eventually led to the establishment of the Oneida Community and its experiment with complex marriage. George Wallingford Noyes, ed., *Religious Experience of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923): 108-109. Rebecca Cox Jackson was a free black woman who became known in the Philadelphia area for her visionary experiences. Jackson's visions persuaded her of the necessity of celibacy to achieve holiness and eventually inspired her to found a black Shaker community in Philadelphia. Jean McMahon Humez, ed., *Gifts of Power: the Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981). Mary Baker Eddy received a revelation that people could heal themselves with their minds. Mary Baker G. Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston, MA: Allison V. Stewart, 1909), 24-29.

in which the human meets the divine. Taves further suggested that the best way to understand religious experiences is to analyze how they are recorded or transcribed and to compare them with non-religious trances, dreams, and other "special" psychological states. Her work along with Schmidt's gives great insight into the changing meaning of terms like enthusiasm and of phenomena like trances or spiritual sounds. Knowing that communities understand certain terms or practices differently, however, does not give insight into the effect of those experiences on them.[43] My study of Hicks and White advances this work by demonstrating the processes by which these hotly contested experiences were adopted and implemented by their followers.

I approach the question of the relationship of revelation and ethics with the assumption that individual lives provide a lens through which to view larger social and cultural issues, but my work is not solely a work of microhistory or biography.[44]

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[43] Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*; -----, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). In *Reconsidered*, Taves suggests that scholars should describe visionaries' physical experiences and compare them with neurological studies to provide greater insight into extraordinary consciousness in general. My approach contrasts with Taves', because whereas she emphasizes the actual moment in which the experience occurs, I study the ways in which teachings from a prophecy or revelation are disseminated and put into practice.

[44] Scholars of religion often employ microhistories of individuals to reveal larger processes and trends. For recent examples, see Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); and James H. Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Jill Lepore suggests that biography and microhistory are in fact two different forms of history endeavor, even when microhistory focuses on the life of an individual. She argues that in a microhistory, the subject is often not famous and has left behind an incomplete historical record. While Hicks and White both left behind voluminous paper records and are somewhat well-known, I claim that my work still shares aims with Lepore's understanding of microhistory, because it also addresses broader processes of community development. For Lepore's argument, see Jill Lepore, "Historians who Love too much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June 2001): 129-144.

Following David Hempton, I claim that the study of the ideas and experiences of prophets is important, because they are "foundational to understanding the kind of movement" created by visionary leaders. In other words, while beginning with two individuals—Hicks and White—I move outward from a history of their ideas to see these ideas in action. My study thus provides insight into the impact of revelation on the development of community structures and behaviors by taking ideas outside of the vacuum of intellectual history and demonstrating ideas, as debated, negotiated, challenged, interpreted, and put into practice by believers, who were not mere recipients of their leaders' inspiration.[45]

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE(S)

Studying the lives of nineteenth century visionaries necessitates reflection on the methodological tools employed to analyze them, especially because the field of religious experience originated during the lifetimes of these prophets. This field was born out of the challenges and struggles of nineteenth-century believers' attempts to find a solid ground for faith and their negotiations of appropriate forms of religious experience. Through these debates, thinkers like Emerson and Schleiermacher claimed a category of human experience that seemed to be common to all faiths, which came to be called "religious experience"—characterized by the unusual psychological states and/or intense

[45] David Hempton explains that a study of John Wesley's theology is "no mere rhetorical exercise in the history of Protestant thought." He also points out that, in assessing the impact of Wesley's theology on Methodism, it is challenging to estimate just "how much was read, how much was appropriated, and how much was applied to daily life." This is true for my work on Hicksites and Seventh-day Adventists as well, but I hope to shed some light on this problem by examining how Hicks and White's ideas were implemented by some of their closest followers. David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CN and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 58, 59.

emotionalism of individuals. My study, while still focused on individuals, expands on recent scholarship by considering the ethical impact of visions and looking at how communities responded to visionaries. Nevertheless, even though I, and others, have suggested important ways of rethinking the field, there are many ways in which it is still dominated by the ideas of its founder, William James.

James argued that religious experience was an individual psychological phenomenon that could provide no theological certainty for the believer, beyond its simple occurrence. Although others had written about it before him, he founded modern approaches to religious experience in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902. Setting aside structural or social aspects of religion, he focused on "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine." By compiling a large compendium of first person narratives of individuals' conversions, mystical experiences, visions, etc., James argued that these experiences were not examples of a unique form of human emotion or experience, as Emerson and Schleiermacher had implied, but related to "other varieties of melancholy, happiness, and trance" within "nature's order." He concluded that any religious beliefs that derived from these unusual, and sometimes pathological, experiences constituted an "over-belief"—evidence of an unseen reality of which science, at least, could not be certain.[46]

Various aspects of James' definition have been supported or challenged by recent scholarship to greater and lesser degrees. First, James suggested that, insofar as it was

[46] William James, *The Varieties of Religion Experience* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 22-25, 31, 519

comparable to other mental states, religious experience was not an entirely unique form of consciousness.[47] In the last century, however, scholars of religion have challenged his framework in a variety of ways. First, some objected to James' suggestion that religious experiences were not distinct from other psychological phenomena. Rudolph Otto, like James, believed that people had religious "mental states," but he argued that people in such states actually meet the sacred, or the "numinous," causing a "creature consciousness" of "nothingness" and ultimately a kind of "stupor" that "strikes us chill and dumb."[48] Mircea Eliade argued that people's experience of sacred space and time "retain[ed] an exceptional, a unique quality," which comes from a religious "mode of being."[49] While their descriptions of the experiential religion shared characteristics' with James', they emphasized the a priori nature of religious experience and objected to putting it on the same plane as other non-religious, psychological phenomena.

Most recent studies of religious experiences have, however, supported James' emphasis on the possibility of comparing them to other forms of consciousness, ones not typically considered religious. Ann Taves claimed that it was imperative for scholars in the humanities to collaborate with scholars in the sciences, who study various forms of human consciousness. Such an approach would enable scholars of religion to be more

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[47] Of course, there is tension within *Varieties* about the extent to which James considered religious experience to be a unitary kind of experience. Calling attention to the "varieties" of experience suggested more than one kind, but he still used the term "religious experience" as though it referred to *an* experience. Ann Taves has argued that scholars must abandon the use of the singular "experience" when discussing the phenomena associated with the religious experiences of visions, dreams, revelations, trances, and so forth. I tend to agree with Taves on this point, but I argue that this point is implicit, if somewhat ambiguous, in James' title and in his comparative approach. Taves, *Reconsidered*, 8-9.

[48] Rudolph Otto *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 7, 10, 27-28.

[49] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959), 23-5.

precise in detailing the meaning of experience, and it would help them to understand the neurological processes at work in experiences that people identify as "religious."[50]

James' assertion that religious experiences are primarily an individual, isolated phenomenon has been more soundly challenged and rejected of late. Scholars like Wayne Proudfoot identified the important role that language plays in constituting religious experiences. He argued that James implied a "post-hoc" application of meaning to conversion, mysticism, and other phenomena by positing the concept of over-belief. Proudfoot, however, argued that there could be no experience that is not in some way predetermined by language. In other words, for an experience to be "religious," the individual must have some ideas about religion in the first place. James, therefore, was incorrect to divide experience from the language that constitutes it. Because language is a communal product, religious experiences are implicitly communal productions as well.[51]

Taves took Proudfoot's criticisms of James a bit further by suggesting that religious experience did not have a static meaning, and by emphasizing the communal

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[50] Taves, *Reconsidered*, 56-71

[51] I argue that Proudfoot overlooks some of the nuance in James' approach to his definition of religious experience. James defines religious experience as: "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine." With his emphasis on how men "apprehend" their relationship to the divine, James implies that he would have agreed with Proudfoot's insistence on making reference to the individual's context. Of course, James seems to want to have things both ways in *Varieties*, because he also frequently insists on the special, if not totally unique, quality of religious experiences. James 31, 52; Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of CA Press, 1985), 1-36, 165ff. Charles Taylor made a similar objection to James' "over-belief" as well. Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 27-28. In *Varieties*, James told the story of a Frenchman who had an episode of terror that made the Frenchman feel as though he were a mummy and reminded him of an epileptic patient. This man claimed that the experience was "like a revelation," but he did not ascribe the event to any particular divine power. Scholars, however, have claimed that this story in fact described James' personal experience and that James used the Frenchman as a cover for his identity. James then probably based his understanding of over-belief on his own spiritual terror—a non-specific, but terrifying revelation. James 159-161.

processes in which religious experiences occur. She pointed out that visions, trances, fits, dreams, etc., frequently occur in a group setting. Thus, to understand how religious experiences become authoritative, scholars should look not only at a person's account of his or her experience, but how that person's community is involved in facilitating, transcribing, and interpreting religious experiences.[52] Charles Taylor agreed with Taves' criticism that James ignored the communal aspect of religious experiences, causing him to overlook groups for which collective experience might be just as emotionally powerful as individual experiences. To him, James also overlooked the importance of ritual and communal action as a form of devotion.[53]

Despite these many challenges to James' thinking, the Jamesian paradigm still dominates the field in a number of ways. Scholars still approach religious experiences as psychological or cognitive phenomena. Taves indicated the psychological nature of religious experiences by suggesting that scholars in the humanities should work with cognitive scientists. Scholars also predominantly employ individual stories as the jumping off point for studying them. Although Taves argues for the importance of considering the communal context, she begins with individuals' experiences within their communities.[54] It may be difficult to circumvent this focus on individuals, because, as a

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[52] Taves, *Reconsidered*, 16ff.
[53] Taylor 23-26.
[54] This is not entirely true for studies that investigate the historical meaning of the term "experience" or "enthusiasm." Taves' earlier work, for example, explores how the meaning of terms like enthusiasm changed over time. See Taves *Fits, Trances, and Visions*; Schmidt, *Hearing Things*.

function of human psychology, religious experiences are most easily approached one mind at a time.[55]

In trying to advance the study of religious experiences, I take a cue from Taves' suggestion that communal contexts are central to understanding how religious experiences occurred and what meaning believers took from them. There is, however, a danger in focusing solely on the psychological qualities of the experience. These are important, but they divert attention from the communal influence that we have been trying to unearth in this field. Instead, I argue that religious experiences should be interpreted not only by their content but also by their impact on visionary leaders and their communities. This implies, of course, that visions, trances, and revelations in fact affect the way that people behave.[56]

Rather than making a normative judgment about the actions and ideas of particular visionary leader, however, as a historian, I seek to describe these leaders' and their visions' influence by uncovering the processes of negotiation that occurred between prophet and followers. Such a methodology allows me to circumvent the question of whether or not religious experiences are real. Instead I ask, in situations in which an individual's visions, revelations, and dreams are accepted as genuine, what difference do

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[55] This individualistic approach, of course, does not allow for group charismatic events in which everyone is caught up in a spiritual experience together. It would be interesting to assess group charismatic experiences that did not rely solely on individual post-hoc accounts, or that relied on an understanding of group psychology.

[56] I recognize that this methodology has roots, yet again, in William James' thinking. He argued that being able to identify the physiological origins of religious experiences did not necessarily negate their "spiritual significance." Rather, he claimed that people value them "either because we take an immediate delight in them; or else…we believe them to bring us good consequential fruits for life." In other words, he emphasized the importance of evaluating the impact of visionary experiences on the people who had them. Whereas he implied an assessment of which experiences were better than others, I assess their impact without applying a normative judgment. James 14-15.

those experiences make on the actions of the community of believers? I also assume that religious communities do not follower their leaders blindly, but instead question, challenge, and interpret their divine guidance both while they decide to follow them and after accepting their authority.

REVELATION, ETHICS, AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

My work on Hicks and White, then, focuses not only on the meaning of their revelations and visions for their communities, but on the processes by which their visionary ethics were transmitted into and practiced by their communities over time. Taken together, their ministries demonstrate that the visions of founders typically spoke to ethical issues—both broadly and narrowly construed. Both leaders addressed personal, interpersonal, and social ills; they both presented themselves as models of obedience to visionary leadership in their autobiographies. Yet they faced different issues in convincing people of their ethical vision for their communities. All Quakers expected their ministers to receive revelations during worship, so Hicks only had to persuade them that following revelation over scripture represented true Quaker orthodoxy. Sabbatarian Adventists, however, came from a wide variety of denominational backgrounds, so White had to persuade some of them not only to accept her teachings, but the existence of visions in the first place. Ultimately, their lives demonstrate the importance of analyzing longer-term concerns of religious community building in addition to the particularities of the historical moment. Their different views of the trajectory of history influenced their lasting legacies to their communities: eventually Hicks' specific teachings fell out of favor among Hicksites, who maintained only his commitment to continuing revelation.

White's teachings, however, remain both influential and hotly contested, because her reputation as prophet is bound up the Adventists' belief in the end of days.

Hicks and White both presented themselves as models for obedience to the religious experiences that inspired their ethical ideals. Even though Hicks emphasized the Inner Light over and above scripture, he still held it to be authoritative as God revealed messages "suited to the states" of individuals at particular times and places. He understood his prophetic dreams and revelations to work through the rational mind, and its work enabled believers to read scripture properly. In his journal, he presented himself as the embodiment of obedience to the Light, as he followed its guidance for his ministerial career and moral correction. He also supported social causes, such as anti-slavery, Quaker plain dress and speech, and pacifism based on his revelations.[57] Ultimately, he believed that revelation enabled Friends to form and to live in Christian community, because it identified individual sins or the community to correct and revealed new truths over time for the community to follow. Revelation, not codified rules and doctrines, ensured right action and behavior, and Friends would progress to better ethical knowledge as they heeded it.

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[57] To the extent that Hicks' religious experiences have been analyzed, he has often been categorized as a kind of mystic in the lineage of Job Scott, an eighteenth-century American Friend. Pink Dandelion says that Hicks' mysticism, however, went beyond Scott's, because "he did not admit the Bible as authoritative." I argue that Hicks still found the Bible authoritative, but that he understood this authority differently. Dandelion 85. Carole Dale Spencer, however, claims that Hicks was not even a mystic, but "in his embracing of rationalism in his mature life, departed radically from the Christ-centered mysticism found in traditional Quietism and early Quakerism." In particular, she accuses Hicks of lacking sufficient emotional connection to God to be a true mystic. Carole Dale Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism: An Historical Analysis of the Theology of Holiness in the Quaker Tradition* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), 123-130. I contend, however, that while Hicks' experience of the Spirit might have been more rational, emotional experience was important to him—just one that was expressed very quietly.

White trusted her visions as divine guidance for how she and others should live, and she relied on them to correct sinful behavior.[58] In her autobiography, she depicted her visions as a logical next step from her involvement with the Millerites. She also used it as a platform to demonstrate that the divine inspiration of her visions by showing her triumph over evil mesmerists. Through her conflict them, she explained that believers could recognize genuine religious experiences from false by looking at their effects. By modeling submission to her own visions and dreams as they corrected her, she implied that all Sabbatarian Adventists should—and must—do the same to prepare for the Advent.

In trying to persuade his community to adhere to his belief in the primacy of revelation, Hicks had to convince them that his ideas represented Quaker orthodoxy and orthopraxy. He experienced typical Quaker revelations in which he did not lose consciousness, and his followers were especially drawn to his emphasis on the Inner

[58] In past several decades, however, scholarly studies of Ellen White have often focused on the question of whether or not her visions were genuine and to what extent she plagiarized her teachings from other scholars and theologians of the era. Ronald Numbers demonstrated that many of White's visions about health reform were copied from the various health writers she was read at the time. Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976). Focusing on her historical writings in *The Great Controversy*, Walter Rea claimed that she was a total fraud. Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, CA: M & R Publications, 1982). On the development of skeptical approaches to White, see Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum*, Vol. 10 (March 1980), 27-41. Ronald Graybill, however, suggested that even though White must have been influenced by what she read, she did not have malicious intent. Borrowing material from other authors would have been common during the nineteenth century. Plus, her visions occurred "like a flash," so she would have needed to borrow historical and theological material from others to flesh out what she had seen quickly. Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century," (PhD Dissertation: The Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 196-204. For my purposes it does not matter whether White's inspiration was genuine, because I examine how she persuaded doubters, and the impact of her visions on the people who believed her.

Light, rather than to specific theological or ethical prescriptions.[59] Nevertheless, Friends debated whether his emphasis on revelation above all was heretical. His advocates claimed that he was upholding traditional Quakerism by emphasizing the supremacy of the Inner Light, whereas his opponents argued that the "first Friends" had always followed the Bible first and foremost. Despite experiences and beliefs typical of Friends, Hicks' conflict with Quaker leadership instigated the first major schism in the Society of Friends in 1828, the Hicksite Separation. In the end, his emphasis on revelations formed the basis of the ethical foundation of Hicksite Quakerism. Even though his specific teachings did outlive him long, his followers adhered to his "ethos of revelation," guided by their belief in the progressive unfolding of the truth.[60]

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[59] With the exception of Spencer's *Holiness*, studies of Quakerism do not theorize about Quaker religious experiences beyond the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This emphasis is understandable, given that practicing Friends want to understand the experiences of their founders. Their neglect of later Quaker religious experiences may also reflect a negative response to Rufus Jones, the first Quaker scholar to claim that Quaker religious experiences were "mystical." Quaker scholars have objected to Jones' view that Christian history consisted of cyclical ebbs and flows of mystical religious energy of which Friends were a part. I do not meant to suggest a return to Rufus Jones' blanket application of mysticism to all Friends, but simply that the particular experiences of nineteenth-century Friends warrant further study. For a good summary of Quaker views of Jones see, William A. Cooper, "The Legacy of Rufus M. Jones," in D. Neil Snarr & Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, eds, *Practiced in the Presence: Essays in Honor of T. Canby Jones* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1994), 15-32. For examples of scholarly work that focuses on early Quakerism see generally Dandelion, ed., *Quaker Theory*; Carla Gerona, *Night Journeys: the Power of Dreams in Transatlantic Quaker Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004); Rachel Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and abroad, 1700-1775* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); and Mack, *Visionary Women*; Spencer, *Holiness*.

[60] Larry Ingle's study of the Hicksite Separation is one of only a small number of book-length studies on the topic. He argues that, despite theological differences, the Separation was at heart about a conflict between elders and ministers. My disagreement with Ingle is a matter of emphasis, because I re-center the story of the Hicksite Separation on the issue of debates about revelation. H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986). Pink Dandelion shares my emphasis on theology in the Hicksite Separation. See Dandelion, *An Introduction*, 85-86. John Punshon suggests that conflicts over authority and individual spiritual experience have been endemic to Quakerism since its inception. John Punshon, "The End of (Quaker) History? Some Reflections on the Process," in Pink Dandelion, ed., *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 32-42.

Though White believed her visions, earning the trust of her followers was a more complicated process, as Sabbatarian Adventists struggled to create new orthodox beliefs and practices. She lost consciousness and fainted—behaviors common at the Methodist camp meetings she attended as a girl. Yet she persuaded people to believe her visions by sanctioning the theological conclusions of church leaders, by rebuking sin, and by promoting health reform. As believers encountered White's teachings on a personal level, through visionary testimonies, or on a communal level through periodicals, they were forced to accept her teachings or to leave the fellowship altogether. She, thus, spread moral standards while gaining adherents. Eventually she affected their social-ethical practices through visions that called for the creation of health centers. The Seventh-day Adventist medical schools and nursing colleges that survive and thrive to this day demonstrate the lasting impact of her ethical mission for the church.

Hicks' and White's visions had different relationships to the long-term ethical commitments of their communities. Despite being widely published, Hicks' teachings were never given a truly special status as Hicksite Quakerism developed. This may be because in the Society of Friends revelation was available to all Christians. Hicks' followers adhered instead to his ethos of revelation—his belief that each generation would receive new moral truths. In contrast, White's visions were give special status as spiritual gifts for the entire church, especially because her followers saw her visions as sure signs of Jesus' imminent return. They were published to affirm theological ideas or to promote new social endeavors, such as the Western Health Reform Institute and subsequent public health projects. She then influenced her community's ethics more

directly by correcting sins and by providing divine guidance on how the church should carry out its mission.

Nevertheless, as a man, Hicks had different opportunities for leadership than White who, despite being the only prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was never considered part of the official church governance structures. Although Quakers generally allowed female members more leadership opportunities than most other contemporary Christian denominations, Quaker women remained subjugated to male leadership. Hicks, for instance, was distinguished as the clear leader of the opposition to Quaker evangelicalism, despite the popularity of a female Quaker minister who preached on similar topics, Priscilla Hunt.[61] Likewise, though White had great power as a prophet, she always remained outside of the hierarchy that ran the day-to-day activities and managed the ministry of the Adventist Church.[62]

By examining the connection of religious experience and ethics through the lives of Hicks and White, my study also provides new insight into their significance to

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[61] Quaker scholars have focused on gender by studying female activists, like Lucretia Mott. In studies of the Hicksite Separation, however, the role of gender has been little explored, and requires further discussion. Thomas D. Hamm, for instance, argues that Priscilla Hunt Cadwalader, a female Quaker minister sometimes associated with Hicks, influenced Hicksite Separation in Indiana, because many Friends sided against the Hicksites because of her divorce. Thomas D. Hamm, "Ministry, Marriage, and Divorce: The Ordeal of Priscilla Hunt Cadwalader," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2008): 407-431. On Quaker women's history: Janis Calvo, "Quaker Women Ministers in Nineteenth Century America," *Quaker History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (1974): 75-93; Gerona, *Night Journeys*; Larson,; and Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Edwina Newman and Judith Jennings, "New Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century British Quaker Women," *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2010): 159-177.

[62] The role of Ellen White's gender in her leadership has been more fully explored. Despite her leadership as a woman, she promoted conservative gender roles for women—a situation that continues to this day. See Stephen G. Daily, "The Irony of Adventism: the Role of Ellen White and other Adventist Women in Nineteenth Century America," (D.Min Dissertation: School of Theology at Claremont, 1983); Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy"; and Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis*.

nineteenth-century America. In particular, as a part of the process for creating ethical norms, religious experiences promoted communal cohesion, a form of ethical "social control." In the case of the Seventh-day Adventists, the ecstatic experiences of their earlier period eventually died out, and White, if informally, became the only prophet for the church. Thus, the presence of religious experiences, derived from a revivalist tradition, led to a greater hierarchy within the church, especially as her visions affirmed decisions by the leadership regarding theology. Yet, her visions also served to complicate and undermine the hierarchy, as she pushed the leadership to follow her insights about how the spiritual message of the church should be spread. Even though they were committed to individual revelation, Hicksites did not have the same revivalist origins as Adventists. After the Separation in 1828, they maintained the same organizational structures that they had previously had and claimed to be the real Society of Friends. Quakers, however, had always controlled behavior more strictly than beliefs—a trend that continued somewhat with Hicksites. Nevertheless, it is important to note that "control" worked both ways—just as prophets could exert control over their followers, followers, too, could require their prophets to behave in certain ways and chastised them for perceived failures as well.[63]

[63] I realize that this understanding of "social control" differs from a more sociological view that emphasizes the imposition of morality and religious beliefs of one social class on another, i.e. the middle class imposing its values on the working class. I do not have the data to make a class-orientated claim, and I do not want to deny the power differential that exists between groups with disparate levels of wealth. I mean only to suggest that religious communities create another kind of moral social control, and one that works both ways. Leaders who fail to live up to their followers' expectations do not necessarily retain them for long. On social control see Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*.

The contingencies of the historical moment created the opportunities for new religious communities to form in antebellum America and forced believers in existing communities to experiment with new ways of living together in community. Hicks and his supporters had to address the rising tide of evangelicalism with its emotionalism and its adherence to stricter doctrine. As a part of that evangelicalism that birthed the frequent revivals of the nineteenth century, White and her followers had to address failed prophecies and to find a way to justify visionary leadership in a time when many skeptics—even among Protestants—questioned their validity altogether. Yet, at the same time, both Hicks and White coped with the exigencies of their time by turning to ideas rooted in longstanding concerns of how to create Christian communities.

Chapter Two: "Clear, Self-evident, and Undeniable": Elias Hicks' Ethical Revelations

For what are all those carnal reasonings worth when put in the balance of the sanctuary against one single impression or conviction of the Divine Light or Spiritual Lawgiver in the secret of our own hearts? This is clear and self-evident and therefore undeniable, but the other is at best but mere vague suppositions, without any solid foundations.
Elias Hicks[1]

As a grown man looking back on his life, Elias Hicks recalled moments of spiritual and moral prompting as some of the most significant events of his life. He presented himself as someone who, even at the age of four, "felt the operation of divine grace, checking and reproving me for my lightness and vanity." He remembered having "a lively active spirit" that "often exceeded therein the bounds of true moderation." He claimed that at night, while lying in bed, he frequently "felt close conviction and fears therefore attended my mind," as he worried that he had displeased God.[2] In retelling the story of his youth, he demonstrated the importance of two issues that would continue to matter to him throughout his adult life: religious experiences and moral conduct. For him, revelation was not about emotion or the miraculous but rather about providing moral

[1] Elias Hicks, *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), 10. Though a version of Hicks' journal was published in 1832 shortly after his death, I have chosen to use Buckley's more recent edition. Large portions of the original manuscript version of the journal were excised from first published version. Buckley has restored these lost passages to the extent possible and made extensive notes about which sections were originally cut. He notes that many of Hicks' most compelling visionary experiences were deleted from the 1832 version. See Buckley, "Introduction," in *The Journal of Elias Hicks* (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), xviii-xix. Unless otherwise noted, I typically cite Hicks' own words, not Buckley's.
[2] Hicks, *Journal*, 2-3

guidance. He believed that it was a communal process that would show people how to live with each other: revelation created community.

Hicks' emphasis on revelation eventually placed him in contention with more evangelical Quakers, who sought to codify doctrines based solely on scripture, but to him the connection between ethics, or right living, and revelation could not have been clearer. He maintained from his earliest memories that his communion with the Holy Spirit, or Inner Light, almost always provided moral guidance of one kind or another. He believed this connection was solidified through his rebellious youth and eventual conversion in the Society of Friends.

As a grown man, Hicks' religious experiences tended to take two forms: visions or revelations. Each of these was accompanied by powerful physiological side effects that influenced his understanding of how revelation worked. He theorized that the Holy Spirit acted on the individual's mind by prompting his or her reason. In recounting his life and ministry in his journal, he implicitly argued that his entire community would one day share the ethical commitments that his visions and revelations inspired, as long as they all adhered to the promptings of the Inner Light. Even though Hicks experienced revelations individually, he ultimately believed that they were an essentially communal process through which all Friends—really all believers—would come to agree about how God wanted them to interact with each other and the world around them. Yet it was his very

emphasis on revelation that initiated the tremors of conflict that would eventually produce the cataclysmic divisions within his own community, the Society of Friends.[3]

CONVINCEMENT

As he told the story of his convincement—the Quaker term for conversion—Hicks presented himself as someone who fundamentally relied upon the Inner Light to discern right from wrong. While spiritual autobiographies are notoriously self-selective, in this case, a close reading of his self-styling provides valuable insight into the way that he perceived himself, or at least the way that he hoped others would perceive him. Though his narrative in many respects followed literary conventions typical of Quakers, and Christians in general, the details of his story reveal a pattern in which he ascertained true ethical behavior through visionary and revelatory experiences.[4] Though he never said so explicitly, he used his convincement as model for how all Friends could learn from and obey revelation.

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[3] The best and most recent account of the Hicksite Separation is Larry Ingle's *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986). Ingle shares my view that revelation was central to Hicks' thinking, but he claims that the power struggle between Quaker ministers and elders was the root cause of the Separation. While I would agree that this struggle formed an important aspect of the conflict, I argue that the separation might never had occurred if they had not had believed that their views on revelation were irreconcilable. For an introduction to Quaker history more generally, see Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[4] In his biography of Augustine, Peter Brown argues that even though Augustine wrote *Confessions* within an intellectual community of people interested in spiritual autobiography, he still wrote his autobiography in a distinct way, making it possible to discern things about his self-conception and self-presentation at the time when he wrote it. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 151-154. Hicks' approach to writing his journal had many similarities with other Friends of the time. Quaker scholar Howard H. Briton borrowed William James' method from *Varieties of Religious Experience* to identify "the various stages of spiritual progress" of numerous Quaker journalists prior to 1800. He included Elias Hicks in this study, and noted that Hicks' pattern of "divine revelations in childhood," "youthful frivolity," and eventual "unification through silence" of a "divided self" were common tropes of other Friends' spiritual autobiographies as well. Howard H. Brinton, *Quaker Journals: Varieties of Religious Experience Among Friends* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1972), ix-5. Nevertheless, Hicks' distinctive theology and practice come through in a close reading of his journal.

In the first chapter of his journal, it is clear that Hicks attributed his sinful youth in part to insufficient parental guidance. He was born March 19, 1748 in Long Island, New York to John and Martha Hicks. As a child, Elias, his parents and five brothers attended the Friends Westbury Meetinghouse for worship every week. When he was eight, his father relocated to Rockaway on another part of the island to work on some inherited land. Hicks was surrounded with the love of his family, attended meetings for worship regularly, and learned about farming.[5] Tragedy struck the Hicks family when Elias was eleven: his mother died. Initially, John kept all of the children at home with him, and his niece cared for them. When Elias was thirteen, however, his father sent him to live with his oldest brother Samuel. He reported that this was a lonely and harmful time for him, because he lacked the family love and supervision he had had as a boy.

While he lived with his brother, Hicks ran with the other neighborhood boys in pursuits that might seem harmless now, but that he, as a Quaker, viewed with shame. He recalled that he and his friends often indulged in hunting and playing cards—activities that he saw as a waste of time, leading to careless behavior. Worst of all to him was the dancing. At age seventeen, John Hicks apprenticed Elias to a carpenter near Hempstead. He frequently met with other young men and women in the area to dance, and stayed out very late—the men and women coupling in secret at the end of the night. His participation in such activities was limited to dancing, but he was often uneasy at these social events.

[5] "Meetings for worship" is the Quaker expression for worship meetings, which they distinguished from other meetings of Friends, such as meetings for business or for discipline, among others.

Hicks portrayed himself as someone with a history of leadings from the Inner Light even before his official conversion. He explained that early on his connection to the Light played an important role in his understanding of morality. When alone, he "took considerable delight in reading the Scriptures, in which [he] occupied some of [his] leisure hours to… religious improvement." These meditations "by Divine Light convinced [him] that its teachings were truth and were superior to "all the reasonings and persuasions of men." Although he wanted to be able to dance with the others, he found that he "could not do unless [he] first became hardened to sin…" Nevertheless, he went through a period of "sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting." He would dance with his friends and only later be struck that he had done wrong.[6] Despite his desire to be carefree, his Quaker upbringing apparently would not leave his conscience in peace.

Hicks thought that his courtship and marriage finally solidified his ties to the Society of Friends. He completed his carpentry apprenticeship at the age of twenty-one, and he began to attend meetings of the Society of Friends regularly. Around this time, he met a young Quaker woman named Jemima Seaman. They met together frequently and began to feel "a continual increase of mutual love," which convinced them that their union would be sanctioned by God.[7] They were married January 1, 1771. Elias and Jemima lived a long life together; Jemima died in 1829. Together they had eleven children—only four of whom lived to adulthood. Throughout their lives they comforted

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[6] Hicks, *Journal*, 8. Peter Brown explained that by the time he wrote *Confessions*, Augustine "had come to regard his past as a training for his present career." Brown 155. In writing selectively about the spiritual highpoints of his youth and young adulthood, Hicks demonstrated a similar view of his past. The only incidents that were worthy of note were those that contributed to his spiritual development.

[7] Ibid 15

and cared for each other through hardships and tragedy. Shortly after they were married, he was invited to take over Jemima's parents' farm, as her parents had no surviving sons. Despite his happiness in marriage, he recalled the first years of their marriage as a fallow period spiritually, as he focused primarily on mastering the farm. Nevertheless, their home in Jericho, New York put them close to a community of Friends, and many of their neighbors were Friends.

In his story of his spiritual awakening—his convincement—Hicks portrayed himself as a potential recipient of great spiritual power. He asserted that powerful visionary experiences accompanied his spiritual rebirth at the age of twenty-six. At this time, he remembered experiencing "some renewed exercise through the operative influence of divine grace" that caused him to see additional sins of which he needed to repent. He cried out to God about these things, and God "graciously condescended to hear [his] cry" and showed him the "way…to experience reconciliation with him." Finally as he "abode in watchfulness and deep humiliation before him," he "had many deep openings in the visions of light—greatly strengthening and establishing to my exercised mind."[8]

Not only did Hicks claim that visions convicted him of his sins, he highlighted how they prompted him to action. He soon became convinced that he must speak openly during meetings for worship. Once when he was "sitting in a meeting in much weightiness of spirit, a prospect opened" guided him "to speak a few words that were then given to me to utter…" When he did not obey, he "felt a close rebuke." After a

[8] Ibid 17

while, he felt that he could "renew covenant with" God, and promised to "be faithful if he should again open the way therefor." Shortly thereafter, he again felt compelled to speak, and this time he did, bringing "joy and consolation" to his soul. He wrote that this one act of submission inspired further "divine knowledge" and "an enlargement of [his] gift" to preach. Afterwards he recalled becoming more involved in his community through participation in "the right administration of discipline and order in the Church."[9] The spiritual pattern he introduced could not have been clearer: receive revelation; then obey it.

VISIONS

In presenting his conversion narrative to other Quakers, Hicks implied that this model would meet their expectations of convincement and simultaneously represented himself as an example to follow. This pattern of obedience to revelation became even clearer as he described the various dreams and revelations that guided his public ministry. The visions and revelations that marked his youth and early adulthood continued throughout his life, and those experiences formed the backbone of his teaching to others about the importance of following the Inward Light, and ultimately they played an important role in his understanding of ethics. Thus, it is important to understand the nature of these experiences. In his journal, he reported a handful of what he called "visions." Though he recorded many fewer visions than revelations, his visions were very powerful—sometimes presenting terrifying scenes and affecting his physical wellbeing.

[9] Ibid 18

His visions served to demonstrate the possibility of receiving specific ethical guidance suited to the exigencies of the moment.[10]

Solidifying for the reader his special connection to the Inner Light, Hicks recalled the fearsome images of a boyhood vision that recurred in his mind's eye whenever he contemplated sinning. In this vision, he walked to school as usual. Along the way he observed a "lopped tree with a hollow in it, wherein, a little bird called the wren sometimes had eggs." When he "looked into the hole in the tree," he "thought [he] beheld the face of an angel… the first prospect whereof struck me with terror as one guilty." Immediately after "there issued a flame out of the hollow of the tree and it enclosed [him] about, as a round ball or blaze or pure fire of about eight feet diameter." Hoping for "some relief," he "apprehended [he] saw [his] father, standing just without the flame," and cried out for help. His father, however, "appeared to be entirely calm and looked upon me without any show of concern." Instead he "very gently requested me to be still, which tended gradually to center my mind and compose it." He "awoke, feeling a very agreeable and comfortable warmth."[11]

Revealing the moral significance that he saw in his visions, Hicks' first reaction to seeing the angel was guilt and then fear. As an adult, he thought the vision represented

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[10] Paul Buckley suggests in a number of places throughout his recent edition of Hicks' journal that he perhaps had more visions than were actually recorded in his journal. When Hicks' journal was edited for publication the first time in 1832, the Hicksite editors deliberately eliminated all of Hicks' descriptions of his visions. In the process, some pages of his manuscript were lost permanently. See Buckley, "Introduction," xviii-xix. Indeed, Hicks must have had more visions than he recorded in his journal, because he occasionally recalled other such "prospects" during other ministerial travels. In 1813, Hicks attended a meeting for worship at a town near his home of Jericho, New York. Being there brought back to his mind "a prospect [he] had about thirty-five years ago of many being gathered in that quarter and the adjacent parts in some future time." He renewed his hope that "the time was now not very far distant when it would be accomplished." Hicks 141

[11] Ibid 3

his "childish idea of the place of judgment," but he claimed that the memory of these scenes helped him to avoid temptation on many occasions. When he "was tempted to evil, this vision would often come up fresh in view and strengthen [him] to resist…" He understood that "this prospect or secret intimation was a visitation from [his] most merciful Redeemer"—the ultimate of personal messages.

Hicks reported his ability to identify sin and temptation from religious experiences more frequently in his adult years. His visions, however, also provided practical guidance later in life in his work as a minister. In the fall of 1781, he became very ill with a serious fever. When he was "reduced nearly to the lowest state of bodily weakness…a prospect opened to [his] mind to pay a religious visit to some parts of [Long Island] where no Friends lived." Yet he resisted this prospect, because he was so sickly. He vacillated about the need to travel for weeks—sometimes resigned to it, sometimes resisting it.

Hicks asserted that a vision finally convinced him to go on this trip. One evening he contemplated whether to go "in some distress of mind." He finally fell asleep, "but seemed in a vision to be in a great ecstasy in regard to performing the visit." In the vision, he was not sure where the meeting would take place, and he cried aloud, "Where should I go to find a house for a meeting?" In his distress, however, he "apprehended [he] saw a black man," who pointed the way to a meeting house, or "seemed to direct my sight to a particular spot." When he woke up, he resolved: "Although I knew not at that time anything of the place or whether there was a house there or not, but it quite eased my

mind and I awoke and felt comfortable, and ever after felt resigned to the prospect."[12] In this case, he allowed his vision to persuade him to make this journey through Long Island.

Hicks also believed that his visions gave him insight into the future of salvation. In 1797-1798, Hicks traveled through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Especially as he journeyed through Virginia, he expressed concern for the worldliness and spiritual deadness he perceived in the Friends he met. One night, he awoke from sleep and his "mind was brought into a state of deep exercise and travail," because he realized "the great turning away of many among us from the law and testimony, and the prevailing spirit of a great infidelity and deism among the people." In this vision, he feared for the people in the Society because of their waywardness and lack of faith, and his "spirit was deeply humbled before the Majesty of Heaven." After begging God to spare his people, his "mind was made easy" and he fell back asleep.

That same night Hicks reported that another "vision, there opened before" him with "the appearance of a bright rainbow that extended from one side of the horizon to the other, through the zenith from the northwest to the southeast." He remembered that the rainbow was "the token of the covenant that God made with his people, that he would not again destroy the world with a flood." He understood that "Great Babylon was now

[12] Ibid 27-28. It is curious that Hicks saw a "black man" in his vision. He did not often refer to the race of the people in his journal, so the fact that the man he saw was black must have been significant to him. He was a supporter of ending slavery, but he did not write much about race beyond that context. I am, ultimately, not sure what to make of this reference to race.

brought into remembrance before God and her cup was full and her fall was near at hand, and that the Lord is now arising and will give her, her due."[13]

To Hicks the apocalyptic undertone of the vision was clear. He saw that "the Kingdom of Antichrist had now got near to its height," and Satan had risen to the top of his power "by leading his votaries to an open acknowledgment of their disbelief." The faithful followers of the Lamb of God, however, could recognize "the man of sin and son of perdition" and rest assured that "the Lord is arising in the greatness of his power and will rule and reign, whose right it is both now and forever."[14] The vision referred to "unbelief," which Hicks understood to mean the prevalence of deism. It indicated the rise in Satan's powers had reached a critical mass, and would soon prompt the return of Christ.[15] Apocalyptic themes were not a common subject of discussion in his journal or sermons, but his visions demonstrated that Christ's return was possible. Additionally, he displayed a clearly anti-deist stance—despite later accusations that he was a deist himself.

While the three visions differed in terms of content, they all related to ethical concerns, broadly construed: Hick's behavior as a child; his ministerial obligations (a duty from God); and the fate of the righteous. Additionally, they shared physical certain characteristics. His visions most commonly happened at night, while he was lying in bed.

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[13] Ibid 77. According to Paul Buckley's annotation, Hicks' vision of "Great Babylon" recalled Revelation 16:17; 17:4.

[14] Ibid 77-78.

[15] Seventh-day Adventists similarly believed that the rise in spiritualism and mesmerism indicated that the power of the Anti-Christ was on the rise. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Seventh-day Adventists have looked for widespread belief in spiritualism, or new age beliefs, as indicators that the second coming of Christ is near. See Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

His first vision occurred at the age of seven—"a prospect [he] had in a night vision." In 1781, he agonized about whether to undertake a particular journey, and a "night vision" came to him about the journey while he tried to sleep. In 1797 another "vision, there opened before" him, as he rested at night. In fact, he reported that he was asleep while the visions happened: "In this situation, I awoke;" "I awoke and felt comfortable; and "And I awoke, and my mind was much comforted…"[16] Although he never called them such, he implied that they were in fact dreams, or had a dreamlike quality from which he could wake up.

What marked these experiences as "visions" to Hicks was that he *saw* things. In his first vision, he "beheld the face of an angel" and "a flame out of the hollow tree." In the second vision, he "saw a black man," who pointed the way to a meetinghouse, or "seemed to direct my sight to a particular spot." Finally, in the third instance, he witnessed "the appearance of a bright rainbow that extended from one horizon to the other…" Vivid, colorful scenes marked his visionary experiences as different from his other spiritual experiences.

Nevertheless, Hicks did not seem to think that his visions were things that had occurred in the flesh. For example, in his first vision, he said, "I thought I beheld the face of an angel…. I thought there issued a flamed… I apprehended I saw my father…" The use of the phrases "I thought" and "I apprehended" indicated that he recognized this was a special event, but it also created a certain distance between him and what he reported.

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[16] Hicks 3, 27-28, 77. Dreams and visions were not uncommon among Friends during this time. See Carla Gerona, *Night Journeys: The Power of Dreams in Transatlantic Quaker Culture* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

He did not say that he actually saw an angel or met his father, but only that he "thought" he saw them. This stands in contrast to visionaries like Joseph Smith, who described his meetings with the angel Moroni in more concrete terms—suggesting that the angel was actually there.[17]

Hicks' visions occasionally returned to him in his waking life, and in writing about his obedience to them, he sought to exemplify a proper relationship with the Inner Light. His childhood vision for instance frequently recurred when he wanted to do wrong. Additionally, some of them appeared to be fulfilled in a literal way. In 1782, after he dreamed of the "black man" leading him to a meeting place, he recovered from his illness and undertook the journey around Long Island. His monthly meeting approved his plan to travel around the island, and they appointed two elders to travel with him.

When Hicks and the elders arrived in the town of Jamaica, his dream about the meetinghouse arose "fresh in [his] mind and the prospect seemed as plain to [him] now as it did in the vision…" He had not told his friends about the vision, so he proceeded to go the way they wanted to go. When they passed the street from his dream, he "felt a stop in [his] mind and told Friends it felt most right to [him] to go down thither, to which they readily agreed." Eventually they arrived at "the spot where [his] mind seemed directed in the vision," and they found a house there. His friends wanted to keep going, because they

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[17] For example, in Joseph Smith's 1832 account of his vision of the angel Moroni, he described the scene not as something he had seen in a dream, but as something that actually happened: "…in the 16th year of my age a piller of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me…the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me…" Unlike Hicks, who said that he "apprehended" he had seen something, Smith simply said that he saw the Lord. See Joseph Smith, "Joseph Smith History, 1832," in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 28.

did not know the person who lived there. He, however, again "felt a stop in [his] mind and told Friends [he] believed [they] must go to that house." When they knocked, the man invited them in and offered them use of his home.

While Hicks and his companions were at the man's home, "a religious black man" came into the house and became excited about their meeting. He offered to spread the word about it. After this turn of events, Hicks became convinced that his vision had been fulfilled. He told his friends about "the prospect [he] before had seen of this place and how everything turned out agreeable thereto."[18] Undoubtedly, the apparent fulfillment of his vision strengthened his faith in its power to express the promptings of the Inner Light. Additionally, by recording this story for his readers, he again modeled faithful obedience to the Holy Spirit.

As he presented them, Hicks' visions provided powerful images of what could be for his life, for his work as a minister, and for the future of all believers—images that contributed to his sense of right living. He made their impact on him clear by showing how they guided his actions and recurred in waking moments to reassure him that he was doing what the spirit wanted. They were also important in affirming his faith in the power and possibility of God to communicate in various ways with individuals through the Inward Light. As he saw his visions fulfilled, he deepened his trust in their legitimacy, which ultimately provided greater certainty of the teachings he received from them. He learned to obey these divine messages, both in their visionary and revelatory forms, implying that others could as well.

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[18] Hicks 28-29

REVELATIONS

If Hicks' sporadic visions were significant to him, his frequent "openings," or revelations played an even more important role in how he portrayed the Light's influence in his day-to-day life and ministry. While these moments of divine communication lacked the imagery of his visions, they provided spiritual truths and moral guidance on a consistent basis. His revelations, even more than his visions, served as a model for faithful Quaker adherence to the Inner Light. He contended that these experiences, which he reported occurring at almost every meeting for worship he ever attended, provided him insight into his own spiritual condition, as well as those of the people around him.

Typified by physical side effects and ethical guidance, Hicks' revelations remained a constant throughout his life. He frequently affirmed that "all those carnal reasonings" were worth nothing "when put in the balance of the sanctuary against one single impression or conviction of the Divine Light or Spiritual Lawgiver in the secret of our own hearts." Revelation, he argued, was "clear and self-evident and therefore undeniable," and, therefore, provided the best ethical instruction and the most certain knowledge of the Truth.[19] He explained to listeners at a meeting for worship that "the holy unction and anointing within" was sufficient—that "they need not that any man teach them but as the same anointing teach."[20] Apart from the Holy Spirit, no other spiritual teacher was truly required. Thus it was incredibly important for each person to experience the inward light for him or herself—a process of "attention to that inward

[19] Ibid 10
[20] Ibid 99

voice, operation, or impression of divine light and life upon the soul" that he described in detail in his sermons and in his journal.

Hicks believed that a person could experience a private opening in any context: "There is no place, no condition too obscure to receive him; so that I have often found his presence at the plough tail, or when sitting upon the plough beam." This ability to "commune with [God] through the medium of his light" anywhere enabled him to receive guidance on a variety of issues.[21] His solitary openings also directed his ministerial journeys. For example, in 1800 he "felt [his] mind drawn" to visit non-Quakers on Long Island and "opened the prospect" to the Friends at his local meeting. They granted him a minute to perform this preaching and travel.[22]

Nevertheless, Hicks reported receiving revelation most frequently during meetings for worship. Much like his first call to speak during a meeting, he frequently felt compelled to speak at the various meetings he attended. He expressed that he often was able "to relieve [his] mind" by being "led in the clear openings of the Divine Light." The content of the openings, which typically gave way to sermons, varied based on the needs of the particular meeting. The process of receiving revelation, however, was similar throughout Hicks' life.

Hicks described the manner in which a person could receive an opening from the Holy Spirit a number of times. In one especially vexed instance at a meeting Epping, New Hampshire in 1793, his "mind was reduced into such a state of weakness and

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[21] Marcus T.C. Gould, ed., *The Quaker, Being a Series of Sermons by Members of the Society of Friends*, Vol. I (Philadelphia: No. 6, North Eighth Street, 1827), 140.
[22] Hicks, *Journal*, 93

depression that my faith was almost ready to fail." The "great searchings of heart… led [him] to call into question all that [he] had ever before experienced." "The depth of [his] baptism in this revelation produced an unprecedented level of "coldness and hardness" within him. Nevertheless as he "endeavored to quiet [his] mind in this conflicting dispensation... a ray of light broke through the surrounding darkness," and he was able "to speak of his marvelous works in the redemptions of souls and to open the way of life and salvation…"[23] Hicks also described the process in more general terms in a rebuke to the Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders in Philadelphia in 1801. He told them that they needed to be "more deeply centered in their minds to the Well-Spring of Eternal Life—waiting and feeling after a Spirit of right discerning." Only then would they "be enabled to judge righteous judgment and distinguish rightly between the living and the dead."[24]

Both passages reveal an underlying pattern to the process by which Hicks received revelation and by which he thought others could receive it as well. First, a person needed to sit in silence—standard practice at any Quaker meeting at the time. Second, he or she needed to focus his or her mind on God ("centered in their minds to the Well-Spring of Eternal Life" and "I endeavored to quiet my mind"). Next, it was necessary to undergo whatever spiritual trial might come—Hicks' "baptism." Eventually, insight would be gained ("light broke through the surrounding darkness") and the Holy

[23] Ibid 52
[24] Ibid 96-7

Spirit, or Inner Light, communicated with the individual ("waiting and feeling after a Spirit of right discerning").

Hicks' struggle with doubt in 1793 demonstrated that the process of receiving openings could be elating, but it could also be very emotionally and physically taxing. He described the physiological side effects of his openings in meetings a number of times. Once while he endeavored to receive an opening—a process that he called baptism or travail—he observed that "the fire burned and [his] heart warmed within" him leading him to speak.[25] The "warming" sensation that he felt on this occasion seemed to be a positive feeling in contrast to the "coldness and hardness" he experienced in his 1793 opening.

Hicks' reported that his revelations also at times induced unusual strength. For instance, his revelatory process sometimes overcame illness. In 1813, as he traveled through Pennsylvania and Delaware, he became very sick—he lost his appetite and frequently broke out into cold sweats. He explained that when he attended meetings, at first "the force of [his] complaint seemed to absorb all [his] strength." However, as he "endeavored to center in quiet, [he] seldom sat long ere the light sprang up and dispelled all darkness," enabling him to overcome his illness long enough to stand and speak about "doctrine new and old."[26] Indeed he once explained to his son-in-law Valentine Hicks that he believed illness often "tend[ed] to strengthen and establish the mind, both in health and strength," but sickness of the mind, while not "in the strictest sense possible,

[25] Ibid 171
[26] Ibid 152

because the mind, or immortal spirit of man, cannot be effected with decease, or sickness, being endued with immortal powers," could cause the body to waste away, if it was not properly focused on the right things. A healthy mind, he thought, however, could improve health, as he had experienced during revelatory experiences.[27]

Finally, Hicks' openings sometimes robbed him of his sense of control over his own body. For instance, as a teenager, the last time he ever danced he claimed that he was "brought under great concern of mind," and he realized that if he "now gave way after forming so many resolutions and should again rebel against the Light, [he] might…never have another offer of pardon." After this striking revelation, he felt "as though all [his] limbs were fettered and [he] sat down and informed the company that [he] was now resolved to go no further.[28] His revelation apparently prevented him from moving. He also reported having the occasional out-of-body experience while expressing thoughts inspired by openings in a meeting. In one instance, his "mind was so swallowed up in this day's exercise, that while on [his] feet, [he] was scarcely sensible whether [he] was in or out of the body." Afterward his "strength was much exhausted," and he was "thoroughly wet from head to foot with excessive sweating."[29]

HICKS' "THEORY" OF REVELATION

Hicks' powerful physiological side effects expressed the complicated relationship among mind, body, and spirit that he experienced in receiving revelation, which formed

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[27] Elias Hicks to Valentine Hicks, 1819 8mo 15, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College
[28] Hicks, *Journal*, 9-10
[29] Ibid 104

the basis of his theory of revelation. During the 1820s, the period that led to the schism in the Society of Friends, his sermons revealed that he had developed a sophisticated, if somewhat unsystematic, philosophy of how revelation functioned within an individual—and how man's body and spirit related to each other during this process. He essentially imagined reason as a kind of mental faculty whose function it was to carry out the promptings of the Spirit. He explained that the Divine Light worked with the individual's reason—arguing that reason and revelation were "the two witnesses" by which God expressed his will. Reason, however, could "do nothing of itself"; it was subservient to revelation. Its job was "only to decide as things are revealed to us by the light." Without revelation, he said, "Our reason would be dormant, as to the things of this world."[30] Revelation thus was a process in which the spirit communicated to an individual's reason, and it provided the basis for ethical action, as it revealed new truths to man's reason.

In describing the revelatory process, Hicks implied that God would never physically appear to people. He believed that the communication between human beings and the Light was entirely spiritual. He argued that God "does not speak to the outward senses;" rather He was a being that "our external senses can never comprehend, that our external eyes have never seen, and never can see."[31] Instead, he imagined that the soul itself had "spiritual eyes, ears, and senses." These internal, spiritual senses were

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[30] Gould Vol. I, 131. Marcus T.C. Gould, a stenographer who hoped to benefit from the popularity of publications surrounding the Hicksite controversy, recorded many of Hicks' sermons and published them. We cannot know with absolute certainty that these were Hicks' exact words, because the published sermons were based on Gould's notes. Nevertheless, the sermons are trustworthy for getting a sense of Hicks' ideas, because they cohere with his arguments in other writings that we know came directly from him, including his journal and letters.

[31] Ibid 90

important because "…nothing can teach or nourish the soul but what is spiritual, because corporeal matter… is not the material of which it is composed."[32] He made it clear that the "soul of man has no material blood." Just as he imagined spiritual senses, he thought the spirit had a "blood" of its own: "with respect to the soul, the immortal and invisible spirit, its blood is that life that God breathed into it."[33] Communion with the divine might not be corporeal, but it was as essential to life as physical blood.

By suggesting that the soul and the body were formed of different "material," Hicks hinted at his belief in the separation of mind and body. He even went so far as to argue that external factors have no impact on salvation. He accused "the people" of "resting in a carnal mind." "Outward blood," however, was "no more related to the soul than the dust of the earth: it has no part with it, nor can it take from or add any part to it…."[34] In his view, the spirit was the only possible receptacle of spiritual truth.[35] His insistence that the material word played no role in salvation provoked strong opposition from some, because he meant that Jesus' death was not necessary for it.

Despite his belief in the division between body and spirit, Hicks still thought they had an intimate relationship. Based on the side effects he experienced during revelation,

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[32] Ibid 4

[33] Ibid 41

[34] Ibid 10

[35] This argument also relates to Hicks' view of Jesus' role in salvation. He argued that Jesus' physical death was not responsible for the salvation of Christians. Rather, salvation only occurred spiritual through inward transformation. Nothing "outward" or material could yield salvation in his understanding of the "gospel dispensation." The division between mind and body also did not mean that sin had no effect on a person's salvation. The body might sin, but it would be the soul that committed the sin. It is also possible that he was speaking somewhat hyperbolically. Throughout his life, he entreated his fellow believers not to rely on any tradition or outward source of spiritual knowledge, especially not creeds passed down from overly educated ministers, who relied upon their carnal minds to interpret the Bible. Thus, in saying that "outward blood" had nothing to do with salvation, Hicks also reminded his listeners to turn inward for salvation by the Inner Light.

it seems clear that there was a connection between mind and body. He also claimed that it was the responsibility of the individual spirit, guided by the Inner Light, to regulate the body. He argued that each person had both spiritual propensities—that compelled people to obey the will of God—and animal, or carnal, propensities. Not all animal propensities were immoral, because some of them prompted people to care for their health. Nevertheless, he thought that animal propensities, like the need to drink, could lead to sinful behavior, like drunkenness—drinking to excess. While he acknowledged that it would be easy to blame the animal propensities for sinful behavior, he claimed that it was the soul's responsibility "to guard and govern the actions of the body." The body was, by contrast, "passive" and required its appetites to survive, so it was up to the soul to "suffer this light to operate in a right manner." Eventually, as the individual allowed the light to work in his or her soul, it would be "enlarged and increased—how it would expand in divine knowledge, until it would finally be clothed to restrain every appetite of the animal man."[36] Revelation then provided the individual with the ability to live ethically, because it enabled him or her to control his or her body.

Believing that revelation's primary function was moral instruction, Hicks clarified to his listeners that it did not entail religious enthusiasm, or bodily exercises—meaning the powerful fits that overtook a person in the throes of worship. He once went to a meeting for worship that included both Quakers and Methodists in Saint Michaels, Maryland. He thought that the two religious groups got along well in general, except for the presence of one man who made "loud groanings" while a Friend, Mary Berry, was

[36] Hicks, *Journal*, 8-9

speaking. He felt the "way opening" to him to speak, and he "opened to the people the hurtful tendency of such inconsistent conduct" and generally spoke on the need for "stillness" in meetings.[37] He argued for the "fallacy and fruitlessness of… mere bodily exercise in matters of religion."[38] Like other ministers of his day, he held a more conservative view of the appropriateness of religious enthusiasm in worship.[39] To him there were appropriate and inappropriate forms of religious experience, and ecstatic expression was not the primary reason for communion with the Light.

Hicks also claimed that revelation did not prove the existence of omens or miracles. In a letter to Roger Brooke in 1825, he described a scene in which his horse went lame, as he and his traveling companions left Baltimore. In an aside to this anecdote, he observed that "some of the Prophets might have thought it was an omen by which they were certified they had left the City too soon, and must go back and do something more there…" He argued, however, that as his "mind has never been much tinctured with that kind of Prophesy [he] was not willing to submit thereto…"[40] While he had interpreted finding a meeting place in 1782 as a sign that his vision had come to fruition, in the case of his lamed horse, he did not see divine action. The key difference seems to be that had had a prompting from the Holy Spirit that confirmed his previous

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[37] Ibid 68-69

[38] Ibid 79

[39] As Ann Taves has shown, Protestant ministers hotly debated the extent to which the emotional outpouring of worship should translate into unusual bodily states. Though Taves focuses on Methodists, it is clear that this debate occurred in other Protestant circles as well. See Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[40] Elias Hicks to Roger Brooke, 1825 2mo 9, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

vision. When his horse went lame, however, no Light informed him that this event meant something. The material world, for him, was not rife with signs to be interpreted.

Not only did the material world lack divine significance for Hicks, it also lacked miracles. In a letter to Susanna Jewett, he explained that he did not "consider any outward Miracle essential to the salvation of the Soul, for had they been they would not have ceased after the Gospel or new covenant was fully introduced, as they certainly did." In fact if miracles did begin to occur again, he thought it would be a sign that people had regressed far from "the inward law and light of the holy spirit."[41] In other words, God's direct action in the physical world would only be necessary if people lost their faith to such an extent that they required miraculous evidence. In that cased, miracles would not be a positive spiritual sign, but would suggest regression on the part of believers.[42]

Hicks also doubted other forms of material divine intervention. For example, he argued that water baptism was unnecessary under the gospel dispensation. He believed that because Jesus had done away with the "law of commandments that stood in carnal ordinances," a person could no longer be called a sinner for failing to observe various rituals and things that were formerly required by that law: "therefore, there can be no sin in the omission of all these under the gospel dispensation, as the law that made them

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[41] Elias Hicks to Susanna Jewett, 1825 4mo 21 Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

[42] The fact that Hicks did not consider revelation miraculous is also telling. Combined with his belief that it operated on reason, he seems to imply that it was in some manner a natural process—albeit one in which the Holy Spirit intervened. Additionally, his view stands in stark contrast to Ellen White and fellow Seventh-day Adventists who actively sought signs in the heavens as signs of the coming apocalypse.

binding is done away and abolished."[43] Unsurprisingly, he recommended caution on adhering to "any custom or tradition." Rather he encouraged people to bring them "to the test of the Light in our own consciences and the reason of things, and also to its consistency with the precepts and example of our Savior Jesus Christ."[44]

ETHICS AND INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Instead of highlighting emotion or the miraculous, Hicks emphasized that revelation's function was primarily to provide ethical guidance. He believed that people who wanted to live contentedly in their sin would never be able to because God would continually prompt them through the "Reprover" placed in every "bosom." This Reprover was marked by the "self-evident touches of Light" in the hearts of people everywhere—urging them to repent of their sins. He had certainly witnessed the workings of the Inward Light to eliminate sin in his life. His first vision kept him out of trouble throughout his childhood. He believed the promptings of the Light helped him to quit dancing. He also wrote in his journal occasionally of situations in which he had fallen into doubt or sinful attitudes and the openings of the Divine Light enabled him to overcome them. Revelation then had deep moral significance for him personally, as it played central role in the development of his conscience.[45] By describing numerous situations in which the Light had changed his moral thinking, he not only outlined his particular ethical commitments, but presented himself as a model of adherence to progressive revelation.

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[43] Hicks, *Journal*, 176
[44] Ibid 164
[45] Ibid 109

Hicks, for example, maintained that revelation taught him to value humane treatment of animals. He remembered that, as a young man, he and his friends "from wantonness of for mere diversion, would destroy the small birds which could be of no service to us." They killed for sport and not from need.[46] It was through "divine meditations" that he reached the conclusion that he should not "take the life of any creature, but such as were esteemed really useful when dead or very obnoxious and hurtful when living." Additionally, if it was necessary to kill an animal, it must be done "in the most mild and tender manner in our power."[47] The Light moved him to empathize with the suffering of other creatures.

Although Hicks never became a vegetarian, nor did he advocate it publicly, he anticipated that one day the Holy Spirit might prohibit the consuming animals altogether. While at home in Jericho in 1813, he described the process of butchering a steer. When he was done, he thought about "the extraordinary change that had taken place"—how quickly the animal had gone from living to dead and into pieces—a "wonderful wreck in nature." He wondered whether it was "right, and consistent with divine wisdom, that such cruel forces should be employed and such a mighty sacrifice be made necessary for the nourishment and support of these bodies of clay." He hoped that a "more innocent and more consistent medium" could "be found, amply to effect the same end of man's

[46] Ibid 6
[47] Ibid 12-13

support." He thought that one day this new way of eating would "become a duty," "if not for the present generation, for those in future to seek it and employ it."[48]

Though Hicks was wary of religious tradition, he claimed to support certain established Quaker practices such as plain dress based on his revelations. Early Friends had dressed primarily in dark colored clothes they thought demonstrated abnegation of worldly pursuits and social equality. The practice was called "plain dress." This rule was strictly enforced in the early years of the Society. Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, various Quakers—particularly urban, wealthy Friends—began to move away from it. Hicks' revelations prompted him to speak out against these changes. As early as 1795, he spoke to a meeting in Nine Partners, New York where he noted that the youth "had almost all gone out of plainness."[49]

Hicks' revelations supported not only the idea that Quakers should live simply, but that they should exemplify simplicity to others. He worried that Quakers' failure to adhere to plain dress would limit their impact on like-minded believers. As he traveled through Maryland in 1798, he attended meetings for worship run by a small sect known as the Nicholites. They were followers Joseph Nichols, who believed that an "Inward Director," or light, guided people to do right.[50] Hicks thought that the Nicholites "appeared one in principle with" Quakers, because they believed in the "the manifestation and influence of the Divine Light, inwardly revealed." He observed that

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[48] Ibid 169-170
[49] Ibid 62
[50] On the history of the Nicholites see Kenneth L. Carroll, *Joseph Nichols and the Nicholites: a look at the "New Quakers" of Maryland, Delaware, North and South Carolina* (Easton, MD: Easton Pub. Co., 1962).

they all dressed completely in white, which he interpreted as a sign of simplicity and purity. Thus he was anxious that Quakers might be a stumbling block to joining in fellowship with the Nicholites, because they were not adhering to plain dress.[51]

The Inward Light also inspired Hicks to uphold the practice of abstinence from civil government. The Society of Friends officially adopted a pacifist stance in 1661, when they published the Peace Testimony to assuage King Charles II's concern that the Quakers would plot against him. Yet Friends also became convinced of the holiness of non-violence.[52] Despite this pacifist tradition, it was more difficult to persuade some Friends to adhere to it when trouble came to their own homes—such as during the Revolutionary War. Hicks reported that some Friends in New York had rented space in a cellar to some of the king's troops. Many Quakers in the New York Yearly Meeting objected to this practice, because it seemed to support the war. The conflict between those who had accepted the money and those who disapproved of their actions—including Hicks—was so intense that they eventually referred the case out to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.[53]

He wanted Quakers to maintain their traditional non-participatory stance, not only because it marked them as a separate people, but also because the Inner Light revealed it to him. Even after the Revolutionary Era, he spoke against participation in associations of various kinds and especially against participation in civil government. On various occasions, he recalled that he "was led…to set forth the great danger…of Friends joining

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[51] Hicks, *Journal*, 68
[52] Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 25
[53] Hicks, *Journal*, 20-21

in with the spirit of the world, in taking part in the fluctuating governments, customs, and manners thereof." He firmly believed that Friends' "strength and preservation consisted in standing alone and not to be[ing] counted among the people or nations who were setting up partial and party interests."[54]

Finally, Hicks' revelations inspired him to take a stand against slavery. At a meeting in Pennsylvania in 1798, he reported being "led to expose the enormous sin of oppression and of holding our fellow creatures in bondage." He believed that slavery was harmful both to slaves and their masters. In particular the children of slave-owners, he thought, were "brought up in idleness [and] were led into pride and a very false and dark idea respecting God," ultimately making them useless to society and unworthy of respect.[55] Anti-slavery was the only topic that Hicks published about prior to the Separation. In 1811, his pamphlet entitled "Observations on the Enslavement of the Africans and their Descendents, and on the Use of the Produce of their Labor" was printed. Although he appealed primarily to reason and wrote in an argumentative style in the pamphlet, he nevertheless addressed himself to people of "every enlightened country, and particularly…those who believe in revelation…" in his call to end slavery and to stop using products that resulted either directly or indirectly from slave labor.[56] In this case, as

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[54] Ibid 73, 84

[55] Ibid 74. Hicks' criticism of slaveholders was of course not an uncommon view of opponents of slavery during the late eighteenth century. Christopher Leslie Brown, for instance, argues that one of the reasons that British Quakers and Evangelicals opposed the slave trade was that it put a stain of corruption on their entire society. Christopher Leslie Brown, Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 26.

[56] Elias Hicks, "Observations on the Enslavement of the Africans and their Descendents, and on the Use of the Produce of their Labor," in *Letters of Elias Hicks including also Observations on the Enslavement of*

in others, his personal connection to the Holy Spirit supported his broader ethical vision for society.

To a certain extent, many of Hicks' ethical considerations can be explained by looking at larger trends within the history of Quakerism. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Friends had entered a period known as "Quietism" in which they emphasized moral discipline and church order first and foremost. Friends became increasingly concerned with the need for certainty that they were acting according to God's will. Direct divine revelation increasingly became associated with intense introspection, and meetings became even quieter. They began to conceive of salvation as a slow process: the Inner Light was planted in a person and grew gradually. This process was characterized by periodic "baptisms" or periods of "suffering or depression."[57] Hicks' revelations certainly followed this pattern.

During the Great Awakening of the 1740s and 50s, Friends reacted negatively to the idea of immediate salvation prevalent. They worried that they were becoming unduly influenced by worldly participation in government and in society at large. Some Friends in both the British American colonies and England had become wealthy due to their reputation for fair business practices, and rural friends were become more lax in their adherence to the discipline--marrying outside the Society, giving up plain dress and speech, and other issues. Reformers decided to crack down on these things by more

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the Africans and their Descendents and on the Use of the Produce of their Labor (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Chapman, 1861), 9-10.

[57] Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 29-30

strictly enforcing the Discipline, their code of conduct and morality. They disowned members who married outside of Quaker meetings, or married non-Quakers.[58]

The environment in which he grew up undoubtedly influenced Hicks' individual ethical development. He always claimed, however, to base his beliefs on personal testimony form the Light—a model he hoped that other Friends would imitate. In the case of activities like hunting for sport and dancing, he seems to have to come to the conviction that these things were wrong primarily due to the visions and revelations that he experienced. When it came to slavery, plain dress, and abstinence from civil government, the order of influence—revelation, then conviction, or vice versa—is less clear. Nevertheless, he professed to rely on revelation to support and strengthen his belief in those ethical positions and to know when those subjects would best suit the needs of his fellow Friends. In fact he argued that, as long his fellow Friends continued to attune themselves to the Light like he did, they would all eventually come to the same conclusions and bind together as one spiritual community.

HICKS' THEORY OF GROUP REVELATION

The seeds of evangelical Friends' quarrel with Hicks can be found in the way that he theorized about the role of revelation in the Quaker community. Although he theorized about how revelation occurred at an individual level, like other Friends he believed that revelation's true power came from its ability to move an entire community of believers. Indeed his understanding of the way that group openings occurred would not have been controversial among most Friends at the time. After all, he participated in this process in

[58] Ibid 30-32

meetings throughout the United States. It was the weight that he gave to the importance of individual and group revelation, as well as the results of his process to which some Friends ultimately objected. In explicating his view that true Christian community depended on revelation, he presented a view of the proper ethical moorings for a group of believers that clashed with Orthodox Quakers' desire for the seemingly surer anchor of scripture.

In Hicks' vision, revelation, rather than doctrine, formed the basis of a healthy Christian community. In a letter to Cornelius Blatchly in 1824, he argued that communities like the Catholic Church and Missionary and Bible societies were not inspired by God but by man. He believed that one day God would overturn groups like these that were based solely on creeds. More importantly, he claimed that the Inner Light "must first be known, and experienced by individuals, yielding up their whole hearts to the Government of the Spirit of truth, in themselves." Only then could people "unite together, and have all things in common, and none others." All individuals in a community, then, must first have a personal connection to the Inward Light, or "Spirit of Truth." He cautioned that it was important for this to happen for the success of the church: "…for should any number of persons, unite and undertake to establish a community without each individual coming first to this estate, it would be of mans building, and will surly come to naught…"[59] The central creed of his faith was the revelation of spiritual truth from the Holy Spirit.

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[59] Elias Hicks to Cornelius Blatchly, 1824 9mo 25, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. The final section of quoted text was originally crossed out in Hicks' letter.

Hicks elaborated that Christian community would promote social harmony. In 1826 in a letter to Thomas Alsop, he explained that if "all individuals [were to] take the spirit of Truth, or light within, as our only rule and guide in all things…then we should hold all things in common and call nothing our own." This common reliance on the Inner Light would lead to a world in which "we should all be made equal" and in which "…all mankind would be but one community." He anticipated that they would "have but one head, but one father and the saying of Jesus would be verified, we should no longer call anyone master… [and] all mankind become brethren." He claimed that this utopian hope was "the kind of community" for which he had "been labouring for more than forty years to introduce mankind into, that so we might all have but one head and one instructor…"[60] His passion for humanity could not be clearer than in this vision of a universal community of all mankind, bonded together by the Inward Light.

Nevertheless, Hicks' logic can at times appear somewhat convoluted. He based his claim of the centrality of revelation on the words of Jesus, and many of his revelations related to passages of scripture. Additionally, despite his emphasis on the spiritual primacy of revelation, he did not envision a post-Christian community. In fact, regardless of the end result of his ministry, his aim was not to create a utopian commune or even a new Quaker community. In the same 1824 letter to Blatchly, Hicks explained that when he spoke of a community that would "have all things in common," he did not mean that he thought believers would actually hold common property. Rather they would have all

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I have included it here because I think it helps to clarify how Hicks thought a community of believers worked.

[60] Elias Hicks to Thomas Alsop, 1826 5mo 14, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

things spiritual in common, and this would lead them to take care of each other as they had need—much like the existing Quaker community. With all of mankind as his ultimate scope for community, Hicks did not imagine something as limited as a commune, and when he spoke of equality his emphasis was, unsurprisingly, spiritual, rather than material.

In many ways, Hicks' conception of communal revelation was not a radical idea for a Quaker. The earliest Friends had allowed for the possibility that anyone could receive revelation from God. This possibility remained implicit in the practices of the Society of Friends in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—even though it had become more common for Friends with a calling to the ministry to dominate meetings for worship. Additionally, Hicks' ideas about the Inner Light's purpose in Christian community closely resembled those of George Keith, an early Friend who wrote an important treatise on silent meetings.[61] In *The Benefit, Advantage, and Glory of the Silent Meeting*, Keith emphasized that "what was to be known of God was manifest within, that the Kingdom of God was to be sought after, and found within…"[62] He also explained that education and preaching got in the way of true worship, which required an individual "to wait upon the Lord in his Light in all possible stillness and quietness, and silence of Mind…"[63] Keith explained that early Friends would not speak in a meeting until they

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[61] George Keith, *The Benefit, Advantage and Glory of Silent Meetings* (London, 1670)
[62] Ibid 6
[63] Ibid 9-10. It should be noted that, while Hicks and Keith seem to understand the process of communal revelation and its role in community similarly, they have certain important differences in emphasis. Namely, Keith emphasized the role of the heart in revelation much more so than the mind or reason, which Hicks argued was the vehicle for revelation. Additionally, Keith mentioned Christ more frequently than Hicks. Though both explained that the Holy Spirit was what gave people access to Christ and the Truth,

were absolutely certain that the Holy Spirit had inspired them. Thus, in their meetings each person would sit silently, "being turned and gathered unto their particular Measures," and as they sat together "they became all as one Body…and one of another by reason of that wonderful and excellent and Glorious Unity, which the several Measures of Life and Light, hath in the particular Vessels and persons."[64] Like Hicks, he emphasized that individual communion with the Light would lead to communal unity.[65]

Yet, in his insistence on following revelation "as our only rule and guide in all things," Hicks proposed a community that differed from the kind based on unified doctrine that Orthodox Friends sought to create. Hicks even believed that communities would come to know how God wanted them to read the Bible through revelation. He claimed, "…nothing else is sufficient—but this Light—to produce knowledge on which belief is founded." He thought that just as people had to learn "letters and their powers… under the guidance and direction of a tutor," so they needed the Inner Light to escape

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Keith seemed to have a more Christo-centric view of worship. This difference, I would argue, is one of degree, not amounting to disagreement. However, it was this kind of difference that would lead evangelically minded Friends in the 1820s to question Hicks' Christianity.

[64] Ibid 12-13

[65] Keith also observed that sometimes one person would have to carry a meeting that was full of people who were suffering from the devil's influence. This one person could make the difference for the entire meeting: "And oft times it so comes to pass, that one only particular Person is made an occasion of great Refreshment, Quickning and Comfort unto many…where divers have come together, but Life had but a weak or small manifestation in and among them…so that, as it were the Power of Death and Darkness could be felt to work strongly in the Meeting, by reason of which those who met had much ado to wrestle against the said dark Power, yet the coming of one among them, and sitting down with them in the Meeting, to wait together upon the Lord in pure Silence, has occasioned Life in great Glory and Dominion to shine forth, & flow like a mighty River through the whole Meeting, and every particular Member thereof, by which every particular could sensibly feel the Power of Darkness…to be removed by the force and strength of Life…" Ibid 14. This was similar to Hicks' experience of fighting the feeling of evil or weakness in a particular meeting.

"ignorance and unbelief therein."[66] He argued that human reason alone would not bring true insight into the scriptures, because people required the Inner Light to teach them how to read the scriptures. Thus, even though his practice of revelation met with standard Quaker practices, his belief in the primacy of revelation was radical to some.

GROUP OPENINGS IN PRACTICE

Regardless of the trouble it caused him, Hicks professed to believe in the power of communal revelation, because he had witnessed it working successfully in practice many times. He thought that revelations would change based on the believers' context—that they were "suited to the states" of particular people in particular places. His revelations then not only gave him insight into the scriptures, they also revealed other Friends' sins to him. During his ministerial career, he participated in hundreds of Quaker meetings, and as he recorded the events of those meetings, he implicitly argued that revelation was the key to ethical communal living.

Hicks believed that the Light made him sensitive to the spiritual struggles of others. At a meeting a Pipe Creek, Hicks admitted that "evil thoughts" kept "arising" in his mind, "insomuch that [he] was almost at times taken off from [his] proper exercise…" As he continued in the "warfare," however, he was "led to believe it was the case of too many present" that "some had become captivated by their own lusts..." He realized that his evil thoughts resulted from the presence of people in the meeting who had "such thoughts" and "lusts." He thought that the Light had enabled him to discipline the group by allowing him to experience their sinful thoughts himself. His knowledge of their

[66] Hicks, *Journal*, 129-130

particular struggles was so accurate that some feared that Hicks would be accused of gossip instead of genuine inspiration.[67] This story may evoke familiar feelings to anyone who has perceived that a preacher's message eerily seemed to be about him or her. Nevertheless, Hicks expressed certainty that his knowledge of the "evil thoughts" came directly from the Holy Spirit's communication. It was not a mere coincidence of topics and members with guilty consciences.

Hicks was not the only nineteenth-century Quaker minister known for unearthing the sins of others. Priscilla Hunt (later Priscilla Cadwallader), a female Friend whose name was sometimes associated with Hicks' during the 1820s, was renowned for acquiring uncanny knowledge of others' inner states. Born Priscilla Coffin in North Carolina in 1786, she was nearly forty years younger than Hicks. After her first husband died in 1813, she moved to Indiana with her father, a Quaker elder. She experienced her call to the ministry in 1815 and made her first long ministerial journey to the eastern U.S. and up into Canada in 1823—just as the Hicksite controversy began to simmer. Though perhaps none of her personal papers survived, her devoted followers collected a series of "memoirs" of her ministry that describe her spiritual prowess in detail.[68]

Hunt's followers believed that she possessed a special gift that "introduce[d] its possessor into close sympathy with other minds"—a gift that was distinct from "the *immediate* and powerful communings of the Most High with the souls of his rational

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[67] Ibid 79-80

[68] Cadwallader's second husband reportedly destroyed her personal papers in anger. No biography of Cadwallader exists, but Thomas Hamm has provided a helpful overview of her life. See Thomas D. Hamm, "Ministry, Marriage, and Divorce: The Ordeal of Priscilla Hunt Cadwalader," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2008): 407-431.

creatures" that was available to all Friends.[69] The editor of the memoirs, T. Ellwood Zell, acquired written accounts from people who had known and traveled with her, replete with stories of how she pinpointed an individual's inner thoughts without prior knowledge of or acquaintance with him or her. For example, in 1823-1824 Hunt traveled with a Friend named James Walton, whose journal entries about their journey were reproduced in the *Memoirs*. Walton reported an instance of negative energy in a meeting, similar to the one that Hicks encountered a Pipe Creek. She had had "hard work" in a meeting in which "her love to [the Friends there] was not reciprocated." She persevered in her teaching and "…turned towards an individual and told him that if he did not repent, turn about, humble himself, and amend his ways he would be so left to himself, and that an ignominious prison would be his portion."[70] Her story demonstrates that while Hicks' abilities of discernment were not unique to him, they were nevertheless considered special—perhaps more so than he would have acknowledged.

Hicks' accounts in his journal of his ministerial work exhibit a pattern of group revelation. He began in silent meditation, as he did in all meetings. After a while, he sensed the needs of the community. At Pipe Creek, he responded to the constant intrusion of "evil thoughts," which he believed to reflect the problems of the community. During a trip through Maryland and Pennsylvania in the late eighteenth century, he sat "a

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[69] T. Ellwood Zell, ed., *Memoir of Priscilla Hunt Cadwallader* (Philadelphia: the Book Association of Friends, 1862), 9-10. The editor of these memoirs, T. Ellwood Zell, referred doubters to "the 12th chapter of Corinthians" for proof of this gift—most likely 1 Corinthians 12—in which Paul wrote about the different gifts of the spirit. Zell did not specify a verse, but it seems likely that he meant verse 10: "To another the working of miracles; to another the gift of prophecy; to another discerning spirits…" Ellen White's followers also referred to this passage to justify her visions.

[70] Zell 47

considerable time in silent labor," and his "mind was baptized into the states of those present." He was revealed "a prospect of the hurtful tendency of pride, both in religious and civil society."[71] He again addressed sin—this time the "pride" of the group there.

In all cases, Hicks believed that revelation was fitted or suited to "the states of those present," meaning that the Inward Light would instruct each group according to its needs. According to him, the mood of a particular congregation could affect the revelatory process. In the previous examples, he attributed his personal travails to the general sinfulness and lack of focus of the meetings. In 1799, at a meeting that included Baptists and Presbyterians, he reported that, through the revelatory process, "Truth favored in an eminent degree…breaking down and apparently reducing every contrary spirit." "Contrary spirits" had affected the group—perhaps unsurprising given the gathering of three such doctrinally opposed denominations. In this instance, he thought that the revelatory process overcame the negative atmosphere, and, in his opinion, everyone there experienced "a remarkable calm and general solemnity…"[72]

On other occasions, Hicks perceived that the presence of attitudes and evil spirits caused a problem. In 1793, Hicks traveled to Rhode Island for the Yearly Meeting held there. He found that "the Spring of Life seemed very low." Indeed he thought that "a very small number [had taken] upon them the whole management of the business." This had inhibited the spiritual abilities of others, "thereby shutting up the way to others and prevent[ing] the free circulation and spreading of the concern in a proper manner on the

[71] Hicks, *Journal*, 73
[72] Ibid 90

minds of Friends…" In this case, the negative and controlling attitude of a few in the meeting was inhibiting other Quakers in attendance from accessing the Spirit and contributing to the general well being of the meeting. The situation did not improve during the meeting—demonstrating that not every meeting would lead to resolution of conflicts or sins.[73]

In fact, Hicks contended that stronger members would often have to help along the spiritually weaker. At the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1801, he explained that "many weighty subjects were opened for deliberation." However, "through the prevalence and mixture of unsubjected spirits, who were too froward and active in their own unmortified wills, much weakness was apparent." These negative attitudes "greatly increased the burden of the living and truly baptized members." He indicated that it was the responsibility of the group to come to a sense of the truth on the issues at hand. When some present at the meeting were not in the spiritual condition to participate effectively in the process, their frailty caused increased labors for him and others, who were "truly baptized."[74]

Nevertheless, the group process did not always cause distress for the spiritually mature or involve combating various contrary spirits. Rather, Hicks thought that, at their best, Friends could inspire each other to important insights. While at home in Jericho, he attended a meeting on December 26, 1813 at which he felt "poverty and weakness of spirit." He resigned himself to this feeling until an "elderly Friend…expressed a sentence

[73] Ibid 46
[74] Ibid 96

or two accompanied with a degree of life, which seemed to give spring to a concern on my mind that led to communication." From this Friend's simple statement, he was prompted to discuss plainness of dress and to exhort the youth of the meeting to "submit to the cross of Christ."[75] In his view, the meeting had roused him and others around him to spiritual heights and lifted them out of spiritual depths—demonstrating to him the efficacy of communal process.

Hicks professed to value others' attempts to ground their faith on revelation as much as his own, and he thought that all believers should trust their own experience to confirm his teachings. At a meeting in Abington, Pennsylvania, for example, he observed that "…many truths of the gospel were opened to the people's consideration." Rather than relying on his words, however, "they pressed to an engagement of mind to realize them in their own experience…" He praised them for "endeavoring by plain and conclusive arguments drawn from scripture testimony and their own experience to gather the minds and attention of the people…"[76] As he had written to Alsop, revelation was the key to a well functioning, ethical community. As long as everyone followed it, the group could discern their sins; learn what God wanted them to know in the moment; and come together in unity of practice—and perhaps belief.

CONCLUSION

Despite his similarity to early Friends' thinking and his frequent participation in communal revelations, Hicks' views still appeared threatening to evangelically minded

[75] Ibid 167
[76] Ibid 156

Quakers in the 1820s. Their fears, in part, were similar to issues that the Society of Friends had to address early on, such as in the case of James Nayler, George Fox's contemporary who was disowned for blasphemy: what do you do when Friends have competing revelations? How can you choose whom to follow? Early Friends had addressed this question by instituting a rule that the church had the right to judge an individual's spiritual testimony and to determine which testimonies were not in keeping with what the church wanted.[77] Leading Quakers used this power to regulate the revelation of people who dissented from the mainstream of the Society of Friends.[78] Yet despite the occasional challenge to seemingly heretical Friends, early Quakers had still allowed a fair amount of latitude when it came to interpreting the Scriptures.

In the early nineteenth century, however, Hicks' ideas alarmed some, because they suggested a return to a more chaotic practice of revelation in which the elders had little say over doctrine. Even more significant was the primacy he gave to revelation. As

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[77] This idea surfaced fairly early in the history of the Society of Friends with the publication of Richard Farnworth's treatise, *A Testimony from the Brethren* in 1666. Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45. This move to regulate who could receive revelation and which revelations were acceptable is fairly common among the history of groups with tendencies toward universal revelation. For instance, in the early history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith had revelation in 1830 that marked him as the sole revelator for the church. While individual Mormons could still receive revelation on behalf of their families or their own lives, only Smith was allowed to create doctrine for the entire church. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 118-122.

[78] For instance, both the Philadelphia and London Yearly Meeting concluded that George Keith was not in "holy fellowship with the Church of Christ" in 1692-3, because Keith had set up independent Quaker meetings in Pennsylvania. Keith, unlike Hicks, had claimed that Quakers did not honor the historical and biblical Christ enough. He left the Society of Friends to join the Anglican Church. While Keith had some followers, the amount of people who left the Society of Friends did not amount to the same large-scale exodus that Hicks caused. Dandelion 53. In the early nineteenth century, the New York Yearly Meeting disowned Hannah Barnard for suggesting that the Bible was not inerrant, because it presented ideas about God that did not seem like they could be accurate. For instance, she did not think the violent God presented in the Old Testament could truly represent God's nature. Her views were somewhat similar to Hicks', as his opponents pointed out. Dandelion 84

he wrote to Blatchly, he believed that experience of the Inward Light was more important that any other aspect of the faith. By this time, however, many evangelical Quakers had begun to argue that doctrine ought to be codified in the Discipline. When he insisted on personal revelation, and his revelations led him to some seemingly unorthodox views about Jesus, evangelical Quakers began to organize a campaign against him. He also suggested the possibility of learning new truth, for the Light to inspire new moral and spiritual understandings. He believed that people after him would learn new things from the Spirit and that truth—at least as human beings perceived it—was not static, but unfolding. Those who sided with him took comfort in the fact that the Inward Light seemed to support their decision to band together, whereas those who opposed him saw his belief in progressive revelation as dangerous and unscriptural.

Chapter Three: An Ethos of Revelation: Elias Hicks and His Community

> *But did we all as individuals take the spirit of truth, or light within, as our only rule and guide in all things, we should all then be willing, and thereby enabled, to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, then we should hold all things in common… This is the kind of Community that I have been labouring for more than forty years to introduce mankind into, that so we might all have but one head, and one instructor…*
> Elias Hicks[1]

In 1808 Elias Hicks and Stephen Grellet—a minister with evangelical leanings—traveled together on behalf of the New York Yearly Meeting to all the meetings under its purview.[2] As they traveled together, Grellet became increasingly concerned that Hicks was not fulfilling the stated goals of their journey—to encourage greater piety in the youth of the Society. He worried that Hicks tended "to lessen the authority of the Holy Scripture, to undervalue the sacred offices of our holy and blessed Redeemer, and to promote a disregard for the right observance of the first day of the week." He saw Hicks' teachings as a greater threat to the Christian faith than the "popish" practices he had been surrounded with in France.[3] As the Separation unfolded, he became one of Hicks'

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[1] Elias Hicks to Thomas Alsop, 1826 5mo 14, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

[2] Stephen Grellet, *Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of Stephen Grellet*, Volume I, Benjamin Seebohm, ed. (London: A.W. Bishop, 1861), 1, 14ff. See also, Ingle 71-73. Grellet was a French aristocrat also known as Etienne de Grellet du Mabillier who fled to Long Island from France in 1795 to escape the Revolution. Though raised a Catholic, he considered himself a skeptic and unbeliever. After meeting Quakers on Long Island, he converted to the Society of Friends not long after this first encounter with the Inward Light, and within two years of his conversion, he became a recognized traveling minister for his Monthly Meeting.

[3] For his part, Hicks did not even mention Grellet in his description of this journey, but reported it as a typical, successful ministerial endeavor. Elias Hicks, *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), 133ff.

staunchest opponents, even traveling along a similar circuit in the late 1820s to persuade Friends of Hicks' "anti-Christian" views.[4]

Grellet's concerns about Hicks' lack of orthodoxy prefigured much of the criticism that he received from evangelical Quakers in the decade leading up to the Separation in 1828.[5] In particular, his accusations that Hicks did not show proper respect for scripture or for Christ proved central to the conflict between evangelically oriented Friends—sometimes called the Orthodox—and the Hicksites. This disagreement took the form of three overlapping debates. Hicks argued that the leadership of the elders in the Society of Friends inhibited true communion with the Inner Light, especially as they tried to impose doctrinal standards on other Friends. Evangelical Friends, however, claimed that Hicks' teachings about Christ's divinity were heretical and based on an incorrect interpretation of the Bible. Finally, both Hicksites and Orthodox contended that their beliefs most closely resembled those of the founding Quakers.

At the heart of these debates was a question of the role of the Inner Light in Quaker belief and practice. When his opponents expressed concern that Hicks did not believe in the Jesus of orthodox Christian beliefs or—even worse—did not ascribe

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[4] Grellet 109. Writing in the 1860s, long after the Separation of 1827-8, and a few years after Grellet's death, Benjamin Seebohm, the editor of Grellet's *Memoirs*, praised Grellet for his prescience in recognizing the "subtle fallacies of an acute but shallow thinker" in Hicks and for his devotion to the "doctrinal soundness" of the Society, see Ibid 110. On Grellet's travels after Hicks, see Stephen Grellet, *Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of Stephen Grellet*, Volume II, Benjamin Seebohm, ed. (London: A.W. Bishop, 1862), 192ff.

[5] I do not engage with a debate about what the term "evangelical" means. I borrow this usage of the term from Larry Ingle who applied it to Hicks' opponents. By evangelical, he meant those Friends who sought to adhere to doctrines taught by Protestant orthodoxy, such as the Trinity and Christ's divinity. Along with that they emphasized scripture more than revelation, and hoped to collaborate with other American Protestants in social projects of various kinds. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 16ff.

scripture its proper due in Christian faith, he typically objected to these criticisms by indicating that his communion with the Inner Light had always supported his understanding of scripture. He argued that religious experience was essential to forming a community of true believers, as the Holy Spirit would inspire collective knowledge of the truth by communicating with each believer individually. The Orthodox, however, feared that this teaching would have just the opposite effect: promoting disorder and disunity among Friends. While these debates might seem like arcane doctrinal conflicts, embedded within them were important ethical considerations: to what extent could the Inner Light be allowed to trump traditional understandings of scripture and behavior?

Despite their continued adherence to belief in the Inner Light, evangelically minded Quakers insisted on limiting the extent to which individuals could follow their sense of its dictates, leading them to reject Hicks' claims to divine inspiration. As the 1820s wore on, Friends would eventually be required to make a choice about how they would live, meaning which guide they would choose to follow. The Orthodox fervently believed that the only way forward was for Friends to make established Biblical doctrines their primary guide for interpreting the Holy Spirit's leadings. Hicksites, however, just as fervently believed that revelation was to be their primary guide, even for interpreting scripture. These differences had the potential to impact the way that Friends decided to live, as Hicksites in particular were likely to adapt their ethics to the changing tide of history.

Once the Separation occurred, Hicks' ideas about the Inner Light shaped the Hicksite community. His influence, however, was not like that of Ellen White or Joseph

Smith whose revelations became law for the community. Though his revelations sometimes stipulated particular ideas about doctrine and social issues, his followers did not codify his openings and visions into a new permanent tradition. Rather they generally upheld his belief in the importance of individual, unfolding revelation: their community would be guided by an ethos of revelation.

DEBATING THE LEADERSHIP OF ELDERS

Hicks' disagreements with Quaker leadership in Philadelphia instigated the conflict that would eventually lead to the Separation, as he suggested that the elders' teachings tended to obstruct rather than instruct true belief. In 1819, he went on a preaching tour to neighboring states. On October 27, he attended the Pine Street Meeting for Discipline, where he spoke at length on the evils of using products produced by slave labor. As he spoke, he reportedly "called upon the youth in an affectionate manner not to rest in the traditions of their Fathers," but instead to heed the Light "as the Spirit of truth led the way and open'd their understandings..."[6] His words, however, offended staunch evangelical Jonathan Evans, who was a member of that meeting—in part because Hicks seemed to challenge Evans for going back on his opposition against slave-made goods. When Hicks left the main room to address the separate women's meeting for business, Evans called for a swift end to the men's meeting. His action was understood to be a

[6] Halliday Jackson, *History of the Separation of the Society of Friends* (1832), 37-38, RG 5/182, Halliday Jackson Manuscripts, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. Jackson was a leading member of the Hicksites, so his version of events must be read with some caution.

slight to Hicks, who would not be able to speak to the men again. He departed feeling the full effect of the snub.[7]

Though Hicks' denunciation of the elders' authority had been presented in somewhat harsh terms, the story spread that Evans had treated a traveling minister rudely. He later visited Hicks to make amends, but he insisted that he back down on his statements against the elders. Hicks, however, refused to recant and demanded an apology from him for his abrupt ending of the meeting. Offended, Evans refused to apologize. This encounter—the first in a series of conflicts with Philadelphia elders—effectively ended their relationship, and they never really spoke again.[8]

Hicks founded his critique of the elders on his understanding of the gospel dispensation. Quakers understood God's relationship with Israel, prior to Christ's death, as the first "dispensation" of the truth, the first time that God made his will clear to man. After Jesus' death, a new dispensation of truth had been given. Hicks explained that whereas the first dispensation dealt almost exclusively with the body and its sins, the gospel dispensation addressed the Spirit. He thought Christ's death had occurred so that

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[7] At this point, the Society of Friends did not have any paid clergymen or administrators. Quaker leadership consisted of two main categories: ministers and elders. Ministers were men or women who had been recognized by their local meeting for worship and affirmed by their quarterly meeting as having a spiritual gift for speaking. Elders were chosen by monthly meetings and affirmed by quarterly meetings; they had the responsibility to look after the spiritual well being of their local meetings, especially the youth and ministers. Conflict between ministers and elders for influence in the Society was one important aspect of the conditions that led to the Hicksite Separation. Paul Buckley, ed., *Dear Friend: Letters and Essays of Elias Hicks* (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2011), 282; Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 39-43. I discuss Quaker organizational structure below in note 11.

[8] Ingle 84-86. Elias Hicks did not mention this particular incident in his travel journal. It is possible, however, that if he had written about it in his journal, that material is lost. Paul Buckley explains that the manuscript copy of that part of Hicks' journal has been lost, so only the edited manuscript remains. See Hicks, *Journal*, 366.

"the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit …"[9] He typically referred to the first dispensation as the "outward dispensation" by which he meant that God's laws dealt almost exclusively with external behavior and that He communicated with most of his followers through external means, such as prophets. In the new dispensation, however, God communicated directly to all believers through the Inward Light.

Up to this point, Hicks and Quaker elders would have agreed with each other. Hicks' teachings, however, seemed spurious to them, because he implied that the gospel was not the final revelation of truth. He argued that the law dispensation had been eliminated, because "…many of its precepts were not good nor consistent with the justice and mercy of the all-beneficent and gracious Jehovah." The law was good "only so as [it] stood in relation to the very low, degraded, and wicked state and the states and conditions of the surrounding nations concerned therein."[10] As he had hoped that people would one day be led to find a more humane way of eating, he implied a progressive understanding of history in which God revealed truths to his people over time, as their spiritual states improved. Human reason alone, exemplified by doctrines imposed by elders and other teachers, could only hinder this process, as God was likely to reveal new truths.[11]

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[9] Ibid 165

[10] Ibid 163

[11] Hicks criticized the elders' attempts to enforce particular doctrines on believers, because, he thought that doctrine should not simply be passed down. For instance, Hicks took offense when leaders in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) decided to add doctrinal requirements to the *Discipline* in 1806. In particular, the PYM emended its *Discipline* to make it possible for a Friend to be disowned for denying "the divinity of our lord and savior Jesus Christ, the immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit or the authenticity of the Scriptures." In the past, however, the *Discipline* had only mandated standards of practice among Friends, rather than specific doctrines. The PYM's decision did not apply to all American Friends,

The elders found Hicks' challenge to their authority offensive and his seemingly cavalier attitude toward Christian doctrine dangerous. His insistence on progressive truth smacked to them of a gross misunderstanding of how the Holy Spirit worked and thus a reliance on the power of his own reason. Whereas he believed that human reason and education led to doctrinal staidness and stagnation, the elders thought that his deviation from long-established Protestant beliefs demonstrated his reliance on human reason. He seemed to them to invent doctrine based on his own ideas rather than the plain truths written in scripture. Stephen Grellet, for instance, wrote that Friends in the NYYM's purview had increasingly fallen under the anti-Christian influence of Hicks who now sought "to invalidate the Holy Scriptures and sets up man's reason as his only guide, openly denying the divinity of Christ."[12] Clearly they had different understandings of what it meant to use reason as applied to the scriptures—and different views of the extent to which the Light should direct their beliefs.

A few years later another conflict with the Philadelphia elders, the Hicksites solidified their ties to each other by affirming their opposition to their leadership. In May 1822, the elders of the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings met to try to prevent Hicks from preaching in the Philadelphia area.[13] This resolution was not carried out at the time,

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but for Friends like Hicks the PYM's need to codify doctrine was a worrisome change from past precedent. To him, their efforts indicated that they only wanted to fit in with other Protestants—something to which he had long objected. Ingle 68.

[12] Grellet, Vol. I, 130

[13] In the nineteenth century, Quakers were organized into a series of meetings with increasing power and responsibility. Each Quaker belonged to a weekly, or local, meeting that met regularly for worship and to discuss church business. Several nearby local meetings met together once a month for business in the monthly meeting. Several monthly meetings in a region formed a quarterly meeting. Finally, all the quarterly meetings in a given region were overseen by a yearly meeting, such as the Philadelphia Yearly

but it demonstrated the intensity of their disapproval of his message. Nevertheless, in December 1822, when he made his way back to Philadelphia, the evangelical elders wanted to meet with him to inquire about the rumors of his anti-Trinitarian beliefs. Initially, Hicks refused. He had been given permission from his home meeting to travel, and he was welcome at the Green Street and Northern District meetings. He thought that it was out of line for elders outside of the NYYM to question his theology, because only the members of his own meetings should have been allowed to test his doctrinal soundness. Nevertheless, he eventually agreed to meet with them.

At this meeting, which took place at the Green Street Meetinghouse, Hicks refused to talk with the elders in private. The elders suggested that if he were unwilling to have a private meeting, it was because the rumors of his heretical views were true. He persisted—claiming once more that they did not have the authority to induce him into such a meeting. The elders left—angry at his defiance. Those who remained at the Green Street Meeting resolved then and there that they would work together to "'assert their rights, and not suffer themselves to be imposed upon' by those who desired 'to have the whole rule and government of ministers.'"[14] Hicks and his supporters had officially laid down the gauntlet.

Meeting (mentioned in note 9). Each yearly meeting was autonomous, but the yearly meetings of London and Philadelphia held more sway than other yearly meetings. In the early nineteenth century in the United States there were six yearly meetings: New England, New York, Ohio, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Indiana. The Meeting for Sufferings was a separate meeting appointed by the yearly meeting to gather regularly throughout the year to address business that came up in between the yearly meetings. Buckley 279-280; Hamm 10-12.

[14] Larry Ingle argues that Hicks' conflict with Evans and the elders was really a sign of the power struggle between Quaker ministers and elders. I do not disagree with his claim that a contest for the power to make decisions was at stake, but I argue that it is important to look again to the theological disputes between

DEBATING THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

The elders' interest in Hicks' anti-Trinitarian views point to a larger source of conflict between the two groups: Not only did Hicks oppose the elders' attempts to enforce doctrine, he also preached unusual views about Christ's divinity. The extent of their differing opinions became clear as each side argued about the meaning of a tract written by Pennsylvania's founder, William Penn. The Orthodox argued that Hicks' teachings about Christ were heretical, in opposition to the Bible and to Penn's teachings. The Hicksites countered by pointing out similarities between Hicks and Penn. Ultimately, their conflict boiled down to questions about the role of revelation in Quaker community and about who could legitimately be called "Friend."

To defend Hicks' view of Christ, in 1825 the Hicksites appealed to the wisdom of Quakers past by reprinting a pamphlet written by William Penn in 1666, "The Sandy Foundation Shaken." It addressed three doctrines that Penn thought the Church of England (and others) had gotten wrong: the doctrine of the Trinity; the need for satisfaction before God could effect salvation; and the idea that sinners could be made righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. The Hicksites claimed that Penn's arguments supported Hicks' teachings, and that the people slandering him had allowed themselves to be influenced by "the popular doctrines of the world," straying from the pure truths of the Gospel.[15] Unsurprisingly, Hicks' opponents responded quickly with "A

Hicksites and Evangelicals to understand the role that revelation and religious experiences in general played in the creation of the Hicksites. See Ingle xiv, 111.

[15] "The Sandy Foundation Shaken: or, Those so Generally Believed and Applauded Doctrines of One God, Subsisting in Three Distinct and Separate Persons, The impossibility of God's pardoning sinners, without a plenary satisfaction, the justification of impure persons, by an imputative righteousness, refuted, from the authority of scripture testimonies and right reason by William Penn; Including: Extracts from the writings

Defence of the Christian Doctrines of the Society of Friends," claiming that it was in fact the Hicksites had strayed from the faith.

The authors of the "Defence" took issue with Hicks' contention that Christ was not divine from the beginning of time but his divinity was only bestowed on him after his baptism. They based their knowledge of Hicks' teachings on two kinds of sources: Hicks' published and widely circulated personal letters to W.B. Irish, Nathan Shoemaker, and Dr. Edwin Atlee and Hicks' sermons recently published by Marcus T.C. Gould. In these sources, Hicks concluded that Jesus was God's son only spiritually: "For nothing can be a son of God, but that which is spirit; and nothing but the soul of man is a recipient for the light and spirit of God."[16] Because matter would eventually pass away, it did not make sense to say that God, who was spirit, could beget a physical body. Similarly, he argued that only spirit could create spirit, so Mary could not have given birth to God's spirit.[17] Jesus, then, had not received the spirit of God until John baptized him the Baptist. It was then, and only then, that Jesus "became a partaker of the divine nature of his Heavenly Father, and by this spiritual birth, became the son of God, with power."[18] Jesus became divine upon baptism—a spiritual process.

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of divers of our primitive friends on the divinity of Christ, Atonement, the scriptures, etc." (Philadelphia, 1825), 3.

[16] "A Defence of the Christian doctrines of the Society of Friends; Being a reply to the charge of denying the three that bear record heaven, the divinity and atonement of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, and the authenticity and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, recently revived against the early Quakers, by the Followers of Elias Hicks. (Philadelphia: 1825), xxiii.

[17] This argument that only spirit begets spirit echoes Hicks' argument about the relationship between mind and body. He thought that the spirit could guide the body, but that the two were separated.

[18] Elias Hicks, "An Essay on the Birth and Offices of Christ" in Elias Hicks, *Letters of Elias Hicks, including also A Few Short Essays, written on Several Occasions, mostly Illustrative of his Doctrinal Views* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1834), 84; "Defence," xx

Hicks took his thinking one step farther by implying that Jesus' divinity was something that all believers could attain. He claimed that by pouring out his Spirit on Jesus at the moment of baptism, God showed "his readiness to do the same to every other of his rational creation… to enable them to fulfil, as Jesus has done, all the righteousness of the gospel…"[19] In other words, to the extent that Jesus had been divine, his divinity was achievable by all believers. Friends who ascribed to more traditional views of the Trinity and Jesus' divine birth thought that Hicks had fallen into great heresy, because his beliefs clashed with the more common view that Christ was God made flesh.

Hicks' opponents also objected to his unusual view of the role that Jesus played in salvation. In short, Hicks argued that the "outward dying of Jesus Christ upon the outward wooden cross" was only intended to redeem the Israelites "from the curse of that covenant and the penalties attendant on every breach thereof…."[20] This meant that Jesus' death on the cross was not necessary for salvation under the new dispensation of truth in the gospel. Hicks drew this conclusion based on two ideas. First, he contended that it was against God's nature to send anyone deliberately to suffer and die on the cross. He objected to this in particular because it would have meant that the wicked men who killed Jesus "would have done God's will, and of course would all have stood justified in his sight, which could not be."[21] Second, he claimed that with the end of God's covenant with the Jews, all outward works had come to an end. Jesus' death on the cross was thus only "a full *type* of the inward sacrifice that every sinner must make" to receive

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[19] "Defence," xx
[20] Elias Hicks to W. B. Irish, 1820 1mo 15, Hicks, *Letters*, 52; "Defence," xix
[21] Elias Hicks to Nathan Shoemaker, 1823 3mo 31 in Hicks, *Letters*, 124; "Defence," xxi

salvation.[22] In other words, Jesus' sacrifice was only symbolic of the spiritual death that all believers would undergo to receive salvation. Hicks thought that salvation was an entirely internal process, and only "the grace of God" could forgive sins and save a person.[23] While his views made sense according to his belief in the completely spiritual nature of the second dispensation, the fact that he effectively denied Christ's role in salvation—limiting him to an example of the process of spiritual salvation—was something that his opponents could not abide.

Because Hicks' supporters had implied that "Sandy Foundation Shaken" would substantiate his views, the authors of the "Defence" used it and Penn's other writings to disprove Hicks' views of Jesus' divinity and his role in salvation. His opponents noted differences between Penn's and Hicks' views of Christ's divinity. In "Sandy Foundation Shaken," Penn rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, but, as the authors of the "Defence" pointed out, he never denied Jesus' divinity. He insisted, rather, that the doctrine of the Trinity as taught by the Church of England was in contradiction with the Trinity of the Bible. Namely, he thought that it was wrong to speak of God having three "persons" or substances." Instead, God was totally unified, as presented in scripture. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all one God, not three aspects of one God.[24] While Penn and Hicks had

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[22] Hicks, *Letters*, 125; "Defence," xxi

[23] Elias Hicks to Edwin A. Atlee, 1824 9mo 27 in "The Misrepresentations of Anna Braithwait, in Relation to the Doctrines Preached by Elias Hicks, Together with the Refutation of the Same in a letter from Elias Hicks to Dr. Atlee of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: 1824), 23; "Defence," xxiii

[24] "Defence," 34-38

both insisted on one God, Penn had not denied Jesus' divinity in the process of making his case.[25]

Hicks' opponents also pointed out that Penn and Hicks understood Jesus' role in salvation differently. Whereas Hicks had claimed that Jesus' role in salvation was limited to providing an example of how spiritual salvation worked, Penn maintained that Jesus' death was part of God's will and his plan for salvation. Penn primarily objected to the idea that Jesus' death was a necessary sacrifice. He asserted that Christ did God's will and was a sacrifice for men's sins, "but not to pay God, or help him, as otherwise being unable, to save men."[26] He thought that God could have saved mankind without Christ's sacrifice, but God chose to have it happen that way. Christ had died for men's sins—something that Hicks disagreed with—but his death was not necessary for salvation only insofar as God could have saved men in some other way—something Hicks agreed with.

The authors accused Hicks and his supporters of trying to force views onto Penn that he did not really hold in order to make Hicks look better. They concluded, "The Sandy Foundation alone, is, indeed, amply sufficient to show that William Penn was widely different in his views…" from Hicks.[27] To a degree, their assessment was correct. Even with Penn's unusual view of the Trinity, he still insisted that he believed in Christ's divinity from birth. Hicks, by contrast, believed that Jesus must have been born a man, only receiving the divine spirit after his baptism. While both denied that Jesus' death was

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[25] Penn's views, admittedly, are confusing. It is difficult to see how he could insist that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all one without resorting to some kind of more traditional Trinitarian doctrine. Penn, however, did not clarify exactly how the Trinity worked, if it did not consist of three separate, but unified divine persons.

[26] "Defence" 41

[27] Ibid 42-43

the necessary component for salvation, Penn still ascribed his death a central role in salvation, whereas Hicks thought that Christ's death was only symbolic of the inward, spiritual sacrifice that all people needed to make to receive salvation. Strictly speaking, the authors of the "Defence" accurately assessed that Penn's writings did not support Hicks' views the way that his followers wanted them to.

In considering the spirit of Penn's views, however, it becomes clearer why Hicks' followers thought that Penn's writings could support their views. In a way Penn's views stood in the middle of a continuum that went from the views of Hicks' opponents (and strict evangelical doctrine) and Hicks' views. Penn, after all, did not believe in the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. He claimed that God was one—something that Hicks also thought. Penn claimed that Jesus was God—a view that Hicks did not share. Hicks thought that Jesus partook of divinity when he received the spirit, and he thought that Jesus was the perfect human example. Thus, while not sharing a traditional understanding of Jesus' divinity with Penn, Hicks' ideas, loosely speaking, had something in common with Penn's in that he also thought of Jesus' divinity in a non-orthodox manner. More importantly, Hicks and Penn shared an interest in stripping away language and doctrines imposed by hundreds of years of scholarship: both denied the trinity as it was understood by orthodox Christians, and both understood Jesus' role in salvation to work differently than orthodoxy as well. Given their similarity of their aims, it is understandable that the Hicksites would have marshaled Penn to their cause.

DEBATING QUAKER ORIGINS AND THE QUESTION OF REVELATION

The Hicksites' and the Orthodox's appeals to the authority of Penn to settle their disagreement point to a broader and even more significant disagreement than their doctrinal conflict: they claimed to represent the genuine intentions and beliefs of the founders of the Society of Friends. Their mutual desire for recognition as the actual successors to Quaker founders reveals the profundity of the stakes of their debates—the winners had the right to be called Friends and the losers, presumably, were lost down the wrong spiritual path. This argument over origins sheds light on how it was possible for such a large division to occur in the Society of Friends, because the conflict had gone beyond a disagreement among family members about a small doctrinal point and reached the point of deciding who even belonged in the family. In the end, the disagreement reflected irreconcilable differences about the role of revelation in the Quaker community with ethical implications about how to decide right from wrong.

Although the Hicksites included very little editorializing in reprinting, "Sandy Foundation Shaken," they made it clear in their introduction that they staked a claim to be the rightful supporters of original Quakerism. The editors of this pamphlet pointed out that it was important for "ecclesiastical" groups to return occasionally to their "original principles" to ensure that they were living up to them.[28] Naturally, the Hicksites had a definite opinion about what the original principles of the Society of Friends were. They contended that the first Friends consisted of "religious and inquiring persons of the

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[28] This kind of thinking was, and remains, not at all uncommon in the history of Protestant Christianity. Indeed a number of American Protestant groups made similar claims about returning to the original principles of the "primitive church." Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

different sects and denominations" who, "rejecting all *creeds* and *confessions of faith*… conformed to the *teachings of the Holy Spirit*…" They argued that these Quakers had agreed with Robert Barclay when he said, "the revelations of the *Light within*, were the only certain basis of all Christian faith."[29] Thus, the Hicksites thought that Quakers had from the beginning relied solely on the guidance of the Inward Light and not on any particular doctrinal or creedal requirements.

By contrast, the evangelical authors of the "Defence" contended that they there the heirs of the first Friends. They argued that Hicks' followers had mutilated, manipulated, and selectively edited the writings of Penn, Robert Barclay, and others to change "the language and obvious meaning" of their words in order to make them agree with Hicks.[30] In particular, they took issue with the Hicksite's claim that early Friends had rejected "all creeds and confessions of faith." They pointed out that if the Quakers had joined together with the intention to eliminate the errors of other groups, they must have had some statement to that effect: in other words, a creed. They asked sarcastically, "Could the early Quakers have embraced or believed in any substantial truths, if they had rejected all belief?" They thought that it was absurd for the Hicksites to say that Quakers were persecuted for what they believed, if they did not have a cogent statement of those belief: "If the Quakers confessed no belief—if they owned no creed, if they declared no particular faith, the world could not know that they had any."[31] While this vitriol deliberately misunderstood the spirit of the Hicksites' statement, the authors of the

[29] "Sandy Foundation," 3. Emphasis in original.
[30] "Defence," iii
[31] Ibid v

"Defence" had a good point: did it make sense for people who claimed that creeds and doctrines were not important to found their legitimacy on the doctrines of earlier Quakers?

After their initial, sarcastic attacks on Hicksite logic, the authors of the "Defence" asserted that Hicks' claims to divine inspiration defied the practices of Quakerism's founders. They drew a sharp contrast between the early Quakers' and Hicks' approaches to the Bible by pointing out that early Friends used the scriptures as "the test in all controversies with their opponents." They argued that the founders rejected anything that conflicted with the teachings of scriptures, even "though offered under the sacred sanction of inward, immediate revelation, they utterly rejected and denied."[32] The authors of the "Defence" explained that though "the revelation of the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus in the soul" was "the very *corner stone*" of their faith, they would not accept any teachings that conflicted with scripture. The Hicksites, however, would listen to inward revelation, even when it conflicted with the known teachings of scripture—and this meant that they could not really be Quakers.[33]

In sum, the Hicksites and evangelical Friends disagreed about two major ideas when it came to their understanding of the first Friends. They had contradictory ideas about what it meant to rely on human understanding. For evangelicals, claiming new revelation that went "beyond the scriptures" was to rely on human understanding. For Hicksites, however, to hold to doctrines passed down from clergyman to clergyman was

[32] Ibid vi-vii
[33] Ibid viii

to rely on human understanding and study of the scriptures, rather than on divine direction. Both sides also stated that reliance on the Inward Light was central to their faith as Quakers, but each had a different view of how far to take the repudiation of the "outward" covenant that God had made with the Jews. Evangelicals still believed that Jesus' death on the cross was a central part of God's plan for salvation. For them, the crucifixion had ushered in the new inward dispensation of truth of the gospel. Hicks, by contrast, believed that Jesus' death was an outward work that was only for the salvation of the Jews.

At the heart of these debates about what constituted genuine Quaker belief was a dispute about the role of revelation in authentic Quaker practice. This disagreement about revelation versus the scriptures did not form the bulk of the "Defence's" explication. Nevertheless, it remained implicitly central to the rest of the pamphlet, because it was Hicks' view of revelation that inspired his seemingly heretical doctrines. Indeed the Orthodox authors spent over three hundred pages detailing where Hicks' followers had excised key passages that would have proven early Friends' Protestant orthodoxy. Their errors was the result of adherence to the Inner Light alone. The authors of "Defence" reminded their readers that Hicks was not the first Quaker heretic to employ Penn's work to support his or her cause. In fact, they noted that Hannah Barnard, a former Quaker minister, had also cited "Sandy Foundation Shaken" to support her cause, and she had been disowned for her heresy in 1802.[34]

[34] Ibid 32. Barnard was disowned, as part of the Quaker "New Light" controversy at the turn of the century. New Lights, such as Barnard and Irish Friend Abraham Shackleton, advocated a non-literal approach to

The Hicksites, in appealing to Penn, suggested that Hicks' views were not heretical when compared to past Quakers. Hicks, however, went beyond this appeal to suggest that such disagreements about doctrine were not essential, as long as all Friends relied upon the Inner Light. For instance, in 1822, he wrote to Gideon Seaman to justify his belief that Jesus' death was not necessary for salvation. To accusations that he had denied Jesus' divinity, he replied that he had never said that Jesus was the child of Mary and Joseph alone. In an explanation that was more likely to alarm Gideon than comfort him, however, he insisted that he did not need to know who Jesus' parents were at all. Instead, all that mattered about Jesus and others "that have long since gone to their eternal homes, is an account of their good, deeds, doctrines and upright example." Even these records of their virtue would only "be useful" after they had been "clearly opened and evidenced in my own mind, by the same truths that enabled them to walk uprightly, or otherwise I have not right to believe what is reported concerning them.[35] He claimed that Gideon was missing the point by pressing the issue of Jesus' divinity, and expressed disappointment that he had fallen prey to doctrines based only on "carnal" knowledge—reading the scriptures alone without the benefit of revelation. Hicks asserted that a revelation about Jesus in the present was all that he needed. To him, scripture without continuing inspiration from the Holy Spirit was a dead record.

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scripture, rejecting passages of the Bible that did not represent God in a moral light. It is not surprising that some evangelical Friends might have seen similarities between her position and Hicks'. Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84; David W. Maxey, "New Light on Hannah Barnard, A Quaker 'Heretic,'" *Quaker History*, vol. 78, no. 2 (1989): 61-86.

[35] Elias Hicks to Gideon Seaman, 1822 5mo 3, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

With that in mind Hicks clarified that doctrine—namely his views of Jesus' parentage and role in salvation—were not essential to communal unity. Indeed in a letter to Thomas Willis (also cited by the authors of the "Defence"), Hicks decided that he could "feel the same flow of love and unity" with people who insisted on believing in the Virgin birth, and he was not sure he wanted them to "change their belief, unless [he] could give them much greater evidence than [he was] at present possessed of, as [he] consider[ed] in regard to our salvation, they are both non-essentials…"[36] Ultimately, he thought it was wrong to ask him, or anyone, to believe something about which they had no direct revelation. Regarding his own belief that salvation did not depend on Jesus' death, he wrote to Edwin Atlee, "But if any of my friends have received *any known benefit* from *any outward* sacrifice, I *do not envy* them their privileges. But surely they would not be willing that I should acknowledge, *as a truth, that which I have no kind of knowledge of*."[37] For him, inward revelation took precedence above scripture—or at least above traditional interpretations of scripture—even when the resulting views might be considered heretical by some.

THE PROBLEM OF REVELATION

Even though Hicks thought that he could dwell in a spiritual community with people who disagreed with his views on Christ, the Orthodox, and perhaps some Hicksites, increasingly did not think this was possible. Evangelically minded Friends demonstrated their fears of Hicks' idea of community not only in the way they treated

[36]Elias Hicks to Thomas Willis in "Defence" xxii
[37] Elias Hicks to Edwin A. Atlee, 1824 9mo 27 in "The Misrepresentations of Anna Braithwait…" 24; "Defence" xxiii. Emphasis in original.

him but in the way they treated others who preached similarly about revelation, like Priscilla Hunt. Additionally, evangelical Friends supported the efforts of Quakers from Britain to reveal his heresy. In the end, they made it clear that there were ethically dangerous implications of siding with him, because his reliance on the Inner Light had the potential to undermine the very communal practices that had for so long kept the Society united. It was the ultimate question about how to live, and evangelical Friends suggested that Hicks' belief in revelation had the potential to cleave the Society in two—a prediction that proved accurate.

Although Hicks received the brunt of evangelical criticism, the Orthodox directed their anger at others who also argued for the preeminence of revelation. Priscilla Hunt, for instance, was identified as an instigator of trouble. Hicks and Hunt traveled along similar preaching circuits during the years that led to the Separation. They had met at least once during their travels in 1822, because Hicks noted meeting her in Camden, Delaware at a Sunday evening meeting.[38] An unknown correspondent of David Seaman's also observed that she had traveled to his meeting at Salem, New Jersey in early 1823 and had "had a very trying time in the city."[39] Hicks noted in his journal in that he was also in New Jersey in January 1823.[40] The proximity of their journeys and their similarity teachings led their advocates and detractors alike to compare them.

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[38] Hicks, *Journal*, 390. This is the only time that Hicks mentions Hunt in his journal, and he does not say anything about her beyond noting her presence. He must have found it significant enough to mention, but we cannot know whether he agreed with the comparisons made between them.
[39] Unknown Author to David Seaman, 1823 3mo 1, David Seaman Correspondence, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College
[40] Hicks, *Journal*, 394

Hicks' supporters indeed felt a certain kinship with Hunt. One defended her alongside Hicks in an 1824 pamphlet entitled, "The Cabinet, or Works of Darkness Brought to Light…" The author compared Hicks' poor treatment during his 1822 visit to Philadelphia to her Hunt's reception in Philadelphia in 1823. He explained that when some Friends in the area learned that Hunt was coming, and they "took steps" to prevent her from entering the city because the had heard that "she entertained sentiments in many respects congenial with those of our worthy friend Elias Hicks."[41] Hicksites saw Hunt's treatment by the Philadelphia leadership as further evidence of their unreasonable and ungodly treatment of Hicks. They continued to think of their fates as linked at least through 1824, as Thomas Fisher, a friend of David Seaman's, warned him in a letter that the two ministers should stay away from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting because "the zeal of the Mob" had been raised against them.[42]

An excerpt from one of Hunt's sermon, which was printed in "The Cabinet," underscored the importance of revelation to Hicksite identity. Like Hicks, Hunt was known for her uncanny ability to intuit what was in the minds of other Friends. They also seemed to agree with each other about the importance of the Inward Light and the way that it functioned. Also like Hicks, she emphasized the importance of the Inward Light above any other spiritual guide, arguing "That there is *no other guide* to Heaven but the *light of Christ within*." She also understood the Light to communicate with people through their reason. She explained that the light "operated" on a "mental faculty" called

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[41] "The Cabinet, or Works of Darkness Brought to Light…" (Philadelphia, 1824), 34

[42] Thomas Fisher to David Seaman, 1824 2mo 9, David Seaman Correspondence, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

reason, which "raises the man above the *brute*."[43] Given the similarity of their ideas about the importance of the Inner Light and its operation through reason, it is not surprising that the Hicksites identified Hunt as an ally in their fight against evangelically minded Friends.

In addition to attacks on Hicks' allies, the Orthodox called Friends from Great Britain to help to root out his alleged heresy. Anna Braithwaite and other British evangelical Quakers arrived in January and February 1823 to investigate his views. After two private meetings, Braithwaite's advocates published a pamphlet that vilified Hicks' teachings, especially his opinion on revelation. In "An Examination of a Pamphlet, entitled The Misrepresentations of Anna Braithwaite, in relation to the doctrines preached by Elias Hicks," her supporters highlighted Hicks' belief in the possibility of "all being revealed to us, without the Scripture" and that "light was progressing, and that we need not recur either to our early friends or to the Scriptures in these days." What most offended them was that he relied too heavily on revelation. For her part, Braithwaite professed that she would never accept "any newer Gospel" unless it was accompanied with "such corroborating testimonies as would be afforded as conspicuously attended the ushering in of the New Covenant dispensation."[44] In other words, new "truth" would not be accepted unless God made it clear through obvious outward signs—the very signs that Hicks thought would only appear due to backsliding and an immature faith.

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[43] "The Cabinet," 35-36

[44] "An Examination of a Pamphlet, entitled The Misrepresentations of Anna Braithwaite, in relation to the doctrines preached by Elias Hicks." (New York: Printed for the Reader, undated), 32-33, 37-38.

The Orthodox, however, did not object to Hicks' understanding of revelation based solely on his seemingly heretical doctrines. Rather they agonized about the ethical consequences of allowing revelation to be the primary guide for a community. They worried that a leader who based his claims on revelation alone was likely to lead his community astray. One pro-Orthodox pamphleteer known as "Demi-Quaker" implied that Hicks' revelations arose "from a desire after distinction." With this self-aggrandizement, Demi-Quaker argued, "the delusions of self-love easily enable a man to substitute his own imaginations for revelations… he proceeds from on step to another, until he fancies himself under the constant and peculiar guidance of the spirit."[45] Hicks' opponents identified his claims to divine inspiration as not only wrong, but possibly self-deluded and arrogant.

More importantly, evangelically Friends expressed a fear that following revelation would provoke disunity and possibly immorality in the Society. Prior to the pamphlet war of 1825, some Friends close to Hicks but with evangelical sympathies cautioned that his ideas might be divisive. For instance, Gideon Seaman, a relative of Hicks' close friend and cousin by marriage David Seaman, wrote to David in 1822 about the issue of Christ's divinity. Expressing an evangelical position, Gideon suggested that "altho He [Christ] was made like unto Man, yet was so constituted…that there was no propensity, inclination, or disposition in him to any thing of evil." He nevertheless did not press his relative David to defend his own views. Rather, he thought that it was a subject best left

[45] "Observations on the Sermons of Elias Hicks, in Several Letters to Him; with Introductory Remarks, addressed to the Junior Members of the Society of Friends by a Demi-Quaker" (Philadelphia, 1826), 4-5. The author of this pamphlet is uncertain, but the pamphlet case claims that Robert Waln was the author.

alone. He did not want David to be "carried too far", especially with an idea that did "not appear essential." He added that Friends could probably debate this issue forever and never come to agreement, "because it is beyond the reach and comprehension of the human understanding with all its abilities. And if is not a matter Materially Essential, we have no right to look for a clear and full revelation." He thought that pursuing it further would lead to "divisions and promote discord." This was exactly how the devil would work—by getting them to argue about small things. He urged that instead it was time to "retire inward, keep in the Quiet, and guard against letting out our minds after new things…"[46] Hicks had himself suggested that these debates were not important to communal unity in his response to Seaman, cited above. It was difficult to set the disagreement aside, however, when the two sides could not agree on the standard by which to judge their beliefs. Nevertheless, early on Gideon Seaman, and perhaps other Friends, were willing to communicate respectfully with reformers like David Seaman and Hicks, but the warning was clear: these inquiries and diversions from orthodox Protestant doctrines were definitely going to cause trouble.

Over time, evangelical Friends reiterated Gideon Seaman's warning to Hicks in an even louder voice. In the "Defence," they insisted that it was standard practice for "every religious society" to hold "certain principles and doctrines… sacred, and necessary to be believed," and that it was important to insist on "conformity to these

[46] Gideon Seaman to David Seaman, 1822 2mo 28, David Seaman Correspondence, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

doctrines…"[47] They contended that Hicks was dangerous, because he had been "deceived by specious pretences to greater spirituality, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit… and a restless desire to be prying into the inscrutable mysteries of God…" The real danger of his thinking then was that it made Friends arrogant, believing that they could know more than had been revealed at Christianity's beginning. Even worse, it had the potential to turn brother against brother with a "demoralizing" and "disorganizing" effect on the Society of Friends.[48]

As an augur of things to come, evangelical Friends pointed to the fact that Friends in the seventeenth century had adopted a policy of disownment based on scriptural grounds. In 1694, the Yearly Meeting added a rule to the *Discipline* that said, "If there be any such gross errors, false doctrines, or mistakes held by any professing truth, as are either against the validity of Christ's sufferings… according as they are set forth in the scriptures…" and he or she chooses to remain in error, then the "body of Christ may not suffer by any particular pretended member that is so corrupt."[49] The authors of "Defence" concluded that this addition to the *Discipline* proved definitively that Hicks' views were in error and that it was right for the members of the church to correct his beliefs. They also seemed to imply that more drastic measures might be in order if Hicks did not repent of his heretical views.

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[47] "Defence" 94
[48] Ibid viii
[49] Ibid 96-97

THE SEPARATION

Tensions escalated during the ensuing two years, until John Comly, the assistant clerk of the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, concluded that separation of the Hicksites and evangelicals was necessary at the time, because each could not accept the other's point of view. He had come to share Hicks' views through his various battles with the Philadelphia elders in the early 1820s. Comly hoped that the separation would be temporary, but he made plans to effect the division at the April 1827 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM).[50]

The Hicksites' initial plan for the Yearly Meeting had been to get Comly elected the clerk of the yearly meeting. They hoped this would enable them to block future efforts of the Orthodox to impose doctrinal standards. When they put forward Comly's name, his opponents objected, because he had previously contemplated separation in past meetings. Evangelicals further argued that current Yearly Meeting clerk Samuel Bettle was a better candidate because of his superior position in society. Abraham Lower, a leading Hicksite, claimed that Comly had greater numerical support and attempted to demonstrate it by having all of his supporters stand on one side of the room. He was unsuccessful, and eventually Bettle reasserted control of the room by taking over the meeting's minute book.[51]

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[50] Ingle 89, 122

[51] Ingle 188-190. While Quakers are famous for their democratic process, their democracy did not and does not function by requiring a majority of votes to get something to pass. Rather, all members of a meeting must reach a consensus before a decision about something can be made. Friends recorded the transactions of each meeting and their communal decisions in the minute. Putting something in the minute book was practically a sacred practice for them. When Bettle took possession of it, he made a clear claim to his right to lead the meeting.

The following day, Comly persuaded Lower and the other Hicksites to allow the evangelicals to continue to run the meeting, because they had already resolved to break away from the leadership of the PYM. On April 20, they met at the Green Street Meetinghouse after the PYM had adjourned. They composed a resolution stating their reasons for separation, which they sent to all the meetings in the area. They explained that the trouble had begun when certain elders in Philadelphia had treated traveling ministers with disrespect and had "unjustly charged [them] with infidel doctrines, denying the Divinity of Christ, and undervaluing the Scriptures, together with divers other things generally known to you, and equally unfounded." Although Hicks was not mentioned by name, the Hicksites at the Green Street Meeting obviously referred to him, and they laid the blame with the elders for instigating their dispute. Furthermore, they claimed that the culpable individuals had been given time to see the error of their ways, but had not repented. "On the contrary, the spirit of discord and confusion" had "gained strength," leaving the Hicksites no choice but to "withdraw… from religious communion with those who have introduced, and seem disposed to continue such disorders amongst us." Such drastic measures, they contended, were necessary to preserve "the quiet and solemnity of our meetings for Divine worship—the blessings of a gospel ministry unshackled by human authority—the preservation of our religious liberty—the advancement of our Christian testimonies—and the prosperity of truth…" They believed that it was essential to the practice of their faith, guided by the Inner Light, not "human authority," that they separate from the Orthodox Friends.[52]

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[52] "Green Street Address" copied Jackson, *History*, 148

The Hicksites had followed the Light, but it had not brought their faith community together. Rather, as the Orthodox predicted, it had cleaved it in two. In the ensuing weeks, the Green Street Meeting made moves to separate from the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting and eventually the PYM. By May 17, Green Street had officially separated from the PYM. Similar processes occurred in the other weekly and monthly meetings throughout the Philadelphia area. By October 1827, the Philadelphia area Hicksites had set up their own Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, parallel to, but separate from, the Orthodox yearly meeting.[53]

AN ETHOS OF REVELATION: THE CREATION OF HICKSITE QUAKERISM

After the separation occurred in Philadelphia, it began to spread to other Quaker meetings at the local and yearly levels. While the division happened relatively peacefully in some regions, like Indiana and Baltimore, the separations in Philadelphia, New York, and Ohio were very acrimonious. Several weekly meetings fought each other over property rights to the meetinghouses and record books as the meetings separated. Families sometimes divided over the controversy. It was an emotionally difficult time for Friends across the country.[54] Hick's journal during this period reveals the intensity of the interpersonal conflicts that characterized the Separation. Through it all he claimed to rely on assurances from the Inner Light to give him certainty about his course of action, and presented the Hicksites as the side that was truly guided by the Light. Ultimately, as

[53] Ingle 195-200
[54] Ibid 201ff

Hicks' supporters organized themselves into a new community, they put this reliance on revelation at the center of their guiding ethical principles, creating an ethos of revelation.

Hicks' journal entries from years immediately after the Separation demonstrate just how contentious it could be. In describing his journey of 1827-1828 to all the yearly meetings in the United States, the tone of Hicks' journal changed dramatically. Though he admitted to conflicts during his life and referred to intense emotions in his journal, he typically refrained from naming people who had offended him and wrote in a more restrained tone. In the aftermath of the separation, however, his encounters with evangelical Friends evoked strong emotions.[55]

Both Hicksites and evangelical Quakers responded angrily to their opponents as they sought to gain control of the property and record books that would legitimate their claims to be the real representatives of the Society of Friends. Skirmishes over the right to access and control meeting houses were a frequent problem. Hicks recorded numerous instances in which the "so-called Orthodox," as Hicks referred to them, prevented him and fellow Hicksites from entering the meetinghouses.[56] On one occasion in Marlborough, Ohio, the Orthodox members of the meeting kept the Hicksites out of the meetinghouse "until the time of the meeting." When they opened the doors to the

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[55] Hicks, *Journal*, 395. Between 1823-1827, Hicks hardly mentioned the conflict in which he was deeply embroiled, except for a few oblique references. In 1823, for instance, he mentioned the "mixed and unstable state" of the Society of Friends. He attributed it the fact that many were "so far from keeping on the original foundation—the Light and Spirit of Truth." Other than that, he made a couple of references to the "discordant spirits" that he occasionally encountered, but he did not write openly about the fight with evangelical Friends. Indeed, he did not write very much in his journal during this period at all—presumably because he was too busy writing letters and traveling. After the Separation began, however, Hicks wrote about it openly and often in harsh language.

[56] Ibid 404, 407, 411, 416, 424

meetinghouse, the Orthodox Friends rushed in and took all the seats on the main floor, requiring the Hicksites to sit in the upper area of the room. When Hicks rose to speak, he claimed that most people there liked what he said, except for "the Orthodox" who declared "their opposition…[and] disunity" with him. He thought that most people there were "disgusted with their behavior."[57] Another time, the Orthodox were so intent on keeping the Hicksites out of their meetinghouse, that one of the Hicksites in attendance climbed through a window to unbar the doors and let them in.[58]

Of course, the Hicksites could be just as petty and belligerent when it came to defending their territory. When Hicks attended the Ohio Yearly Meeting in 1828, the Hicksites again attempted to gain control by replacing the previous clerk with a leader of their own who had not "disqualified himself…by publicly opposing ministering Friends in meetings of worship…" When the former clerk left the front of the room, he took the meeting records with him. Other Orthodox Friends tried to take the table with them, but the Hicksites stopped them from moving the table, breaking it to pieces! After that, both sides conducted meetings for business in the same room. The Orthodox quit their meeting first and decided to adjourn until ten the next morning. The Hicksites decided to resume their meeting at nine the next morning, presumably to obtain control of the space before the Orthodox could. When the Orthodox returned, they insisted on access to the room.

[57] Ibid 414
[58] Ibid 420

The Hicksites refused them and managed to maintain control of the meetinghouse until they had finished their yearly meeting two days later.[59]

In addition to disputes over property, the Hicksites, especially Hicks, experienced acrimonious personal conflict. Hicks blamed the separation on "a few envious individuals" and "several Friends" "from old England", like Anna Braithwaite, who had begun "to accuse their Friends of holding unsound doctrines."[60] To make matters worse, some evangelical Quakers persistently confronted Hicks during his 1828 journey. Thomas Shillitoe, for instance, attempted to prevent Hicks from speaking several times as he traveled through Pennsylvania, refusing to "acknowledge [him] as a member." Though Hicks said he felt sorry for his old Friend, he also seemed offended by such treatment.[61] Elisha Bates, another of the Orthodox, similarly harassed Hicks while he was in Ohio—publicly "haranguing" him many times.[62]

Hicks comforted himself in part by mocking his opponents' faults. He accused Shillitoe of "disturbing" and "unsettling" the meetings at which he spoke, exposing himself "to ridicule."[63] He observed that Bates responded to Hicks' teaching "in a long, tedious, repetition of scripture passages" "with a tone of voice that manifested so much irritation" that many people there "were much disgusted with his communication."[64] In one particularly amusing description, Hicks recalled a time when Orthodox friend

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[59] Ibid 421-422
[60] Ibid 415. Paul Buckley notes that the editorial board for Quaker publications excised this and many other similar passages before Hicks' journal was published for the first time in 1832. Many of the deleted passages showed this rougher side of Hicks, or were very hard on the Orthodox.
[61] Ibid 407-410
[62] Ibid 417-419
[63] Ibid 407-408
[64] Ibid 417-418

Charles Osborne attempted to stop him from speaking by taking up the entire meeting time himself. Hicks wrote that he could not remember "such a prayer…ever before heard from the lips of any man" and that Osborne must have "repeated the great name, I apprehend, forty or fifty times."[65] Based on this vitriol, it seems likely that Hicks gave as good as he got in these confrontations with Shillitoe, Bates, and others.

Personality quirks aside, however, Hicks believed that people responded to him much differently—proving to him that the Inner Light still directed his actions. As he traveled, he continued to speak about the importance of "the only sure foundation of true and real Christianity—the Light Within or Spirit of Truth, the immediate revelation of the Spirit of God…"[66] As he did, he perceived that he had proof that the Inward Light was bringing together the community of true believers. He expressed great confidence that he and the "Friends"—he never referred to his side of the conflict as the Hicksites—were on the side of the Truth. Whereas Shillitoe apparently prompted disorder and disturbance in a meeting, Hicks thought that he evoked "solemnity… which has been the case in every meeting where they have not been disturbed by others." Bates' teaching was "tedious" and irritating, but Hicks believed that his teaching "brought previous solemnity over the assembly…and many minds were contrited." He claimed that meetings continued to be "solemn and quiet" as long as "the Orthodox have not disturbed our meetings." Undoubtedly, members of the Orthodox side would have disagreed with Hicks'

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[65] Ibid 423. For anyone who has ever sat through a prayer in which the supplicant said the phrase "Father God" or "Lord Jesus" repeatedly as filler, this description is all too apt. It seems likely that Osborne had been influenced by evangelical worship patterns to pray in such an effusive manner. Buckley says that this story was also excised when Hicks' journal was originally published in 1832.
[66] Ibid 419

characterization of their behavior and of his success. Nevertheless, to him the fact that the Spirit prompted people to silent and solemn worship when he spoke indicated that the group revelatory process was working, and God was on his side.

For Hicks, the results of his revelations spoke for themselves: People were coming to agree on the same truths. The power of revelation became even clearer on various occasions when enemies became friends. At one meeting with Quakers, "Romanists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians" and others, Hicks claimed, "Truth in a very extraordinary manner was raised into victory over all." According to him, people from all of these different confessions were "unite[d] with one voice," and "the whole assembly was baptized into one body." When the meeting ended, Hicks reported that everyone wanted to shake his hand, and he was overwhelmed with gratitude.[67] Another time, he felt especially reassured by the fact that his openings persuaded "some [who] had previously gone with the Orthodox" of "the impropriety of their conduct."[68] He apparently even convinced slaveholders in Virginia the error of their ways![69] It is impossible to know for certain that Hicks' account accurately represents what happened; however, he presented himself as victorious in following revelation.

Hicksite leaders also reportedly relied on revelation from the Inner Light to confirm that they had done right in fomenting separation. In their correspondence, they consoled themselves by reasserting their belief that the Inner Light had guided them to this decision. In 1828, Jesse Kersey wrote to Hicks that he felt more assured about the

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[67] Ibid 430
[68] Ibid 405
[69] Ibid 429

separation after having attended several meetings at which he felt "the calming power and influence of the divine spirit owning us in our Meetings[.]" He claimed, "I can now have no doubt of the propriety of the course which we have been led to take."[70] He also closed his letter by expressing his appreciation of Hicks' "precious Gift which thou hast received from the head of the Church..." Revelation seemed to persuade not only Hicks but other Hicksites to trust themselves.

The Hicksites' reaffirmed their commitment to revelation as their guiding ethical principle a few years after the separation had been made. They expressed this commitment in the way they remembered their leader. When Hicks died in 1830 at the age of 81, the Jericho, New York Monthly Meeting wrote a "Memorial" of the life of Hicks. The writers of the memorial highlighted his commitment to strong ethical principles, such as antislavery and plain dress, and they especially emphasized his efforts "to rally to the ancient standard, the light of truth manifested in the heart…" They recalled how he exhorted people to rely on "Christ within," the Inner Light. He was so dedicated to this principle that he encouraged the young "not to rest in the tradition of their fathers, but to walk by that same rule and to mind the same thing, which has led the righteous in all ages safely through time…the influence of divine grace in their own hearts." They also remembered that his own devotion to the Light has given him unique abilities as a minister. In particular, even when he spoke to a "large concourse of persons of various denominations," he was able to evoke proper stillness in worship. Their

[70] Jesse Kersey to Elias Hicks, 1828 3mo 4, Elias Hicks Manuscript Collection, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

emphasis on revelation can be seen further in the message that the Hicksite NYYM attached when they approved the Jericho Meeting's memorial: "Much solicitude was felt and expressed that it [the memorial] may…encourage us to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing, which enabled him to become so eminently useful in this day and generation."[71]

In trying to account for the Separation, prominent Philadelphia Hicksite Halliday Jackson accused the Orthodox of instigating all of the problems facing the society when they insisted on opposing anyone who did not agree with their view of scripture. The problem, he explained, was not necessarily with their doctrine but that they wanted to inhibit the abilities of Friends to follow the dictates of the Inner Light to their consciences. Traveling ministers, for instance, "who [had] felt concerns to visit the meetings of that great and prosperous city [Philadelphia] felt a dread on their minds" that had made them want to "shrink from the clear manifestations of religious duty rather than to have their doctrine convast [canvassed?] by such inquisitorial men." Even worse was that, according to Jackson, the attitudes of the Orthodox had "had a discouraging effect on the ministry within the meetings over which they had jurisdiction." He claimed that "many concerns that were originated" in these meetings never had a chance to be explored as they were "crushed in the bud…before they were considered and judg'd of in the proper deportment of society."[72] He believed that the Orthodox's stiff enforcement of

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[71] "The Memorial of Jericho Monthly Meeting of Friends Concerning our Ancient Friend Elias Hicks," in Elias Hicks, *Journal of the Life and Religious Labours of Elias Hicks* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1832), 444-451.

[72] Of course Jackson's account was particularly biased toward Hicksite concerns and may have a slanted view of what actually happened. For my purposes, however, it is significant that the Hicksite perception of

doctrine prevented the community from functioning properly, thereby missing opportunities to learn new things from the Inner Light.

The Hicksites sought to avert such apparent disregard for the Inner Light in their new community. As they created their own version of the *Discipline* they asserted the importance of making the Inner Light the center of their practice. William Wharton, a member of the Hicksite leadership, helped to draft a "General Epistle" to the members of the Hicksite PYM in 1833. The letter began by affirming their commitment to "the sufficiency of this holy unction, as the foundation of true faith."[73] They claimed that because of this commitment they "were enabled to hold up to the world the standard of Truth and righteousness, and to preach with power the coming of Christ in his inward and spiritual manifestation."

Wharton and his fellow Hicksites explained that adherence to the Light was necessary to avoid moral decline. They asserted that "there never was a time when this people had more need [to] recur to this ancient foundation and characteristic principle of our Society…" They warned that there were "interested men" who had tried "to divert" people "from the inward operations of the powerful Word of life to outward views and the speculative opinions." Thus it was important for the members of their Society to adhere to the "divine Gift" in order to be able to find the Truth, and to avoid being

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the sequence of events leading to the Separation was dominated by disregard for allowing the Inner Light to direct the community. Jackson, *History*, 34-35.

[73] "Our Yearly Meeting of Friends held in Philadelphia by adjournments from the 8th day of the 4th month of the same inclusive 1833," from documents concerning the Hicksite separation, RG 5/162, Joseph Wharton Family Papers, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College

"'carried about with every wind of doctrine.'"[74] Like Hicks, they said that the Bible was sure to benefit only those "whose spiritual senses have been quickened and made alive unto God."

In this letter, the Hicksites implied not only that the Hicksite Yearly Meeting maintained belief in the Inward Light in contrast to evangelical Friends, but also that revelation was the key to all other aspects of their faith, including living in "righteousness." They saw it as their responsibility to uphold what they viewed as the central insight of Quaker faith in the face of opposition from people who were persuaded by evangelical doctrines. They claimed that adherence to the Inward Light was necessary to living a moral life. In the letter they addressed "the youth of both Sexes," saying that it was important for them to submit to "the Divine will" in order to "escape the vanities and corruptions of the world." Revelation protected them from sin.

Conclusion

As they reflected on Hicks' life and organized their own version of the Society of Friends, the Hicksites put revelation at the center of their community. It is important to note, however, that even though they admired Hicks for his example of ethical living, they did not create a new set of laws or principles based on his specific teachings. Instead Hicksite leaders only maintained his connection between revelations and ethics by emphasizing that one must follow the light to avoid sin. By the late nineteenth century,

[74] This is a reference to Ephesians 4:14. Sometimes Protestants used this passage to justify the doctrine of "sola scriptura", or only the scriptures. Interestingly, the Hicksites seemed to use this passage to suggest that it was important to rely on the Inward Light in order to avoid being taught false doctrines based on scripture.

the Hicksites were clearly still devoted to the ideas of progressive revelation, even if they had abandoned Hicks' commitment to certain conservative Quaker principles.

Nevertheless, this commitment to revelation did not immediately create a harmonious community. In the years after Hicks' death, the Hicksites split into two groups. One group particularly valued the traditional aspects of Hicks' teachings—his belief in plain dress and speech and in remaining apart from interdenominational organizations. Another smaller and more radical contingent grasped more firmly to the idea of progressive revelation. They argued that Friends must become involved in changing the world for good, especially by getting involved in antislavery campaigns. Indeed many leading figures in the antislavery movement, like Lucretia Mott were, or had been, Hicksite Quakers. While Mott remained in the Hicksite Quaker community for her entire life, other more radical Hicksites either withdrew from Hicksite meetings or were asked to leave them. These reform-oriented Friends created their own independent meetings, known as Progressive Friends meetings. By the late 1840s, it seemed once again that following the Inner Light had become divisive.[75]

Over time, however, Hicks' ideal of progressive revelation brought the Hicksites back together and guided them in new directions as a faith community. By the 1860s and 70s many of the most conservative leaders of Hicksite meetings began to pass away, leaving behind leaders with more liberal leaning sentiments. Hicksites began to worry about the future of their Society: their numbers shrank every year. Through their attempts

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[75] Christopher Densmore, "From the Hicksites to the Progressive Friends: the Rural Roots of Perfectionism and Social Reform among North American Friends," *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2006): 243-255; Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 39-46.

to address this crisis, they came to a consensus about many core beliefs. In general, they touted their opposition to evangelical creeds and statements about Christ's divinity; they embraced free thought; and they involved themselves in some late-nineteenth century reform projects. Most importantly, they became even more convinced of the truth of progressive, continuing revelation. As one Friend put it, "Man is progressive, and truth a continued revelation, by which we mean if we seek after and follow the 'Light' we will be prepared to receive newer and higher conceptions of truth."[76]

Hicks might not have agreed with all the decisions the Hicksites made; yet the fact that his word did not become law was in keeping with his philosophy of continuing revelation. In a letter to his friend and frequent correspondent, William Poole, he once expressed reticence at having his journal published for posterity. He argued his thoughts at any given moment were intended *only* for the people at that time. He told Poole, "Could I pen something down that might be useful to the present and succeeding generation, and then be obliterated, it might not be amiss." He thought, however, that in the future "greater and brighter things will be opened to a succeeding generation than I and the people in this generation can bear." Knowing this made him "unwilling to leave anything of my experience that might tend to hinder the reception of those new and advanced revelations."[77] In contrast to some of his contemporaries, like Joseph Smith and Ellen White, Hicks did not leave behind a complex set of ethical rules to obey. Instead,

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[76] S. E, "Some Things We Need in Our First Day Schools," *Journal*, 6th Mo. 28 (1880): 182 in Thomas Hamm, "The Hicksite Quaker World, 1875-1900," *Quaker History*, vol. 89, no. 2 (2000): 26.
[77] Cited in Buckley, "Introduction," xviii. Buckley's introduction first suggested to me that Hicks believed in the possibility of receiving new spiritual and moral truths over time.

he passed down to his belief in the progressive nature of truth and the importance of following the direction of the Inward Light, wherever it might lead the community. He gave them an ethos of revelation.

Chapter Four: "Lost to Earthly Things:" The Visions of Ellen G. White

And as we prayed, the Holy Ghost fell upon us. We were very happy. Soon I was lost to earthly things, and was wrapped in a vision of God's glory.
Ellen G. White[1]

Ellen White had her first prophetic dream at the age of fourteen. She witnessed people entering a temple to be protected from an oncoming calamity. Outside the temple some people tried to prevent others from entering it—saying there was no real danger. She waited to enter the temple until the last possible moment. Inside she saw a bleeding lamb, tied to the pillar that held up the entire structure. People stood behind it singing, waiting for the end of the trouble outside. She realized that she had to confess her sins to the lamb in order to join them. When she finally faced the lamb, all the happy people disappeared, and she was left alone in the dark.[2]

Young and afraid, White thought that this dream prophesied what would happen to her, if she failed to be sanctified of her sin.[3] Despite her recent conversion experience, she felt great anxiety about her eternal state. She had taken to heart preaching about eternal damnation that emphasized the 'molten waves [that] would engulf" sinners for

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[1] Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by herself; With a Sketch of her Subsequent Labors and of her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 100.

[2] She was then unmarried and went by her maiden name, Ellen G. Harmon. Ibid 33-34

[3] In the Methodist Church, sanctification was a process of attaining perfection, or becoming free from sin. Though Methodists believed that sanctification could be a gradual process, in the 1840s, they were taught to believe that perfection was something that could be achieved instantaneously, accompanied by an intense, emotional witness of the spirit. White thought that she had not yet achieved this kind of emotional response. On sanctification see, E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the age of Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 269-271.

eternity. These descriptions caused her to think of God as a "tyrant" rather than a "tender, pitying Friend of sinners…" She became convinced that a wall existed between God and herself—obstructing her salvation.[4]

Her fears subsided only after a second dream in which White saw Jesus face to face. In this dream, she saw herself meditating on her desire to see Jesus. A guide came to her door and told her to take up her belongings and come with him, if she wanted to meet Jesus. She followed him up a narrow, rickety staircase. Many people ahead of her fell off because they did not keep their eyes focused on the path above. Finally, she made it to a door at the top, where the guide told her to leave all of her possessions.

Behind the door, White saw Jesus. She hesitated to meet his gaze, because he seemed to know everything about her. He reassured her by gazing lovingly at her. After a time, she left and reclaimed her possessions. Her guide "handed her a green cord coiled up closely." He explained that she could stretch the coil wide whenever she wanted to see Jesus, but she was not to "let it remain coiled for any length of time, lest it should become knotted and difficult to straighten." Understanding the coil to be faith, she began to have some hope for herself. She knew it was possible for her to reach Jesus if she kept exercising her faith.[5]

In her autobiography and letters to her early followers, Ellen White presented her visions as a moral, practical, and theological guide not only for herself, but for the Sabbatarian Adventists, the community of believers who would come to be known as the

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[4] White, *Life Sketches*, 30-31
[5] Ibid 35-36

Seventh-day Adventists. These two dreams exemplify the kinds of visions that she experienced throughout her life. Full of vivid imagery, they encouraged her to keep herself from sin and to pursue a closer bond with Jesus. They also prophesied of things to come in the future. Her visions formed an important part of her strategy to persuade her fellow Adventists of the genuineness of her spiritual gifts. In the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, she joined in with a group of Millerites who still believed in his teachings, but believed that there was a heavenly significance to October 22, 1844. In telling the story of her spiritual upbringing and eventual conversion at a Millerite camp meeting, White hoped to convince these readers of the sincerity of her spiritual experiences and her worthiness to be the ecstatic visionary leader of their new Adventist movement.

Yet White's conversion narrative alone would not be sufficient to convince others of the legitimacy of her prophetic gifts. She also described the ethical lessons of her many dreams and visions—especially the connection between morality and health and their ability to discipline sins—and simultaneously modeled obedience to them, a model she hoped all Adventists would follow. There were some Adventists, however, who doubted the legitimacy of her visions at all. For them, she provided rich details of the physical side effects of her visionary process to help prove that they were divinely inspired, not diabolically inspired through mesmerism. In so doing, she developed an informal theory about how true visions could be distinguished from false visions—a standard to which she intended to hold not only herself, but all Adventists.

CONVERSION

In telling the story of her spiritual development from her childhood to her first vision, White presented herself as someone whose experiences would be recognizable to her fellow Adventists. While singling herself out as someone with a divine calling, she nevertheless sought to demonstrate that her visions constituted a natural outpouring of her experiences in the Millerite movement. She first wrote the narrative of her conversion and early spiritual experiences in the early 1850s, as part of a campaign to persuade others of her prophetic role for their community of believers.[6] Like Hicks, White told the story of her conversion in a Protestant culture that was accustomed to hearing about conversion experiences. Unlike Hicks, whose revelations were standard Quaker practice, however, she had to persuade her readers not only that her conversion was genuine, but that her unusual visions could be trusted as well. Thus, by demonstrating a typical conversion experience and her loyalty to the Millerite movement, she laid the groundwork for acceptance of her somewhat unusual visions.

White presented the events surrounding a childhood injury as the first indication that she was spiritually unique. Born in 1827, she spent her early years in Maine. Her parents joined the Methodist Episcopal Church when she was a young girl, and she remained in this church until 1843. At the age of nine, an older child threw a rock at her face, while she, her twin sister, and a friend were walking home from school. Though she

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[6] White's early visions first reached a wide audience in a special edition of the Sabbatarian Adventist periodical, *Sabbath Review & Advent Herald*. White later expanded upon it in an autobiographical work called *Experiences and Views*, which formed first hundred pages of *Life Sketches*, the autobiography cited throughout this chapter. See Ellen G. White, "Experience and Views," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol. II, no. 1, extra* (Paris, Maine, 1851); --------, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851) and -------, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854).

revived quickly, she soon collapsed again. She was unconscious for three weeks, and only her mother thought she would survive. When she awoke, she prepared herself for death—" pray[ing] earnestly for the forgiveness of sins." Feeling at peace, she began to hope that everyone could be forgiven his or her sins, as she had been. Her recovery and reported religious reaction to it allowed her to show that she had received a divine mission from an early age. It also set the stage for her lifelong preoccupation with health issues and their relationship to spirituality.[7]

White demonstrated the development of her spiritual vocation by describing her conversion to the Millerite movement. She claimed that she became eager to have a conversion experience at the age of thirteen, after hearing William Miller's preaching. He was a traveling revivalist preacher, who had converted back to Christianity from deism in the late 1810s. During his conversion process, he undertook an intensive study of the Bible, and concluded that Jesus would return sometime in 1843, beginning his one thousand year reign before the final rapture.[8] White heard him speak for the first time in March 1840, when he visited Portland. She remembered being completely persuaded by the way that "Miller traced down the prophecies," "dwelt upon the prophetic periods, and brought many proofs to strengthen his position." She doubted her conversion at age nine, and desperately wanted to receive salvation soon.[9]

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[7] White, *Life Sketches*, 17-18
[8] On Miller and the Millerites, see David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1985).
[9] White, *Life Sketches*, 20-24

White described her conversion at a Methodist camp meeting in the summer of 1840 in terms that would have resonated with many Adventists who had also attended revivals. She recalled that the minister there explained that it was impossible for people to become perfect before asking for salvation. Rather, "it [was] only by connecting with Jesus through faith that the sinner [became] a hopeful, believing child of God." She felt comforted by this, but had continued anxiety about the fact that she had not "experience[d] the spiritual ecstasy that [she] considered would be the evidence of [her] acceptance with God."[10] At the altar, White pleaded with Jesus for salvation. While she prayed, she felt as though her "burden left [her] and [her] heart was light," and she felt a "surety in [her] heart that He [Jesus] understood my peculiar trials, and sympathized with me." Her struggle with sin and eventual emotional ecstasy would have been familiar to other Adventists, assuring them that her conversion was legitimate.[11]

After her conversion, White became deeply involved in the Millerite movement, just like other early Sabbatarian Adventists. She viewed her conversion experience and baptism into the Methodist church as compatible with her belief in Miller's prophecies—a belief that solidified during his return visit to Portland in 1842. The members of her

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[10] White's expectation of an emotional conversion was common among Methodists who attended revivals. While there were many American Protestants that did not approve of extreme emotional expression during worship services, fainting, emotive cries, shouting, and other forms of ecstatic worship were regular occurrences at revival meetings, particularly at Methodist meetings. On the nature of revivals, and particularly Methodist revivals see, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Ann Taves highlights the contested nature of this kind of "enthusiastic" worship. See *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 76-118.

[11] White, *Life Sketches*, 22-24

church in Portland, however, resisted his message. On one occasion, she and her brother Robert shared their testimonies of salvation and belief in Jesus' imminent return. After they finished, "the presiding elder asked her if it would not be more pleasant to live a long life of usefulness, doing others good, than to have Jesus come speedily and destroy poor sinners." The Harmon siblings and their family resolved to remain faithful to Miller despite this opposition. Like other future Adventists they were put on trial by their church and were publicly dismissed from church fellowship.[12]

White depicted her visionary experience as a logical extension of her time as a Millerite, and, through her description of the event, she suggested that her visions had an important role to play in building a new community from the rubble of Millerism. In the immediate aftermath of the Great Disappointment, she went to visit Mrs. Haines in Portland in December 1844. She was praying with five women, when "the power of God came upon [her] as [she] had never felt it before." She perceived that she was "surrounded with light" and "rising high and higher from the earth." From her elevated vantage point, she tried to locate the "advent people in the world," but did not see them. She then looked up to a higher, "straight and narrow" path, and saw the Adventists were traveling to a city in the distance by following a "bright light."

White understood that Jesus was leading them to a city, and as long as they did not doubt him, they would not fall off the path. Those who questioned the path lost the

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[12] Ibid 43-45, 52-53. Many Millerites were kicked out of their churches, especially as 1843 approached. Miller had encouraged his followers to remain in their own churches. As his followers became more and more vocal about Christ's imminent return, however, it became impossible for many churches to accept their seemingly odd beliefs. David T. Arthur, "Millerism," Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1974), 154-201; Rowe 95ff.

light and fell off to the world below. Jesus approached the living saints on a cloud and sounded his trumpet, calling the saintly dead out of their graves to join them in the air. After seven days, they reached the sea of glass where Jesus gave them crowns, harps of gold, and palms of victory. Then Jesus led them through a "pearly gate" into the city. When the vision was over, "everything seemed changed," and "a gloom was spread over all that I beheld." She felt that this world just could not compare to her view of heaven. For her "it was a sad and bitter change to wake up to the realities of mortal life," but the believers there apparently felt certain that God was encouraging them.[13]

The way that White described this incident in her autobiography reveals that she hoped former Millerites would accept her visions as legitimate. She explained that the vision occurred during normal worship practices—a prayer meeting of fellow Millerite women. The circumstances leading up to it were not unusual, demonstrating that its occurrence could be trusted as a natural overflow of regular Christian worship. More importantly, she desired them to see her visions as central to creating a new community of former, but faithful Millerites. Her vision showed them that they could be a distinctive people by persevering through Miller's misunderstanding of the meaning of 1844. They would also be distinctive, however, by the mere fact of having a visionary leader, who would continue to provide them with divine reassurance.

WHITE'S VISIONS AND HER PERSONAL ETHICS

Through narrative of her first vision, White implicitly argued that her visions were the logical extension of the Millerite movement. In the rest of her autobiography,

[13] Ibid 64-68.

she presented her visions as integral to the formation of the new Adventist community by showing the ethical lessons that she learned from them personally. She suggested that the people who abandoned their cause "had built their faith upon the evidence of others, and not upon the word of God." She became convinced that every individual should have his or her own experience of the truth—for her this came in the form of frequent religious experiences. They created such an intense feeling of connection to God that she came to rely on them as the best guide for choosing how to live. Much like Hicks' revelations, her visions relating to herself and her family played a vital role in how she conceived of her special mission from God, in how she lived her day-to-day life, and in how she developed certain ethical and moral standards for herself that she would eventually spread to her community. In particular her visions revealed the link between morality and health, and they demonstrated that they could be a source of moral reprimand for White. In depicting her reliance on them, she implied that other Adventists should trust them as well.

White's visions instructed her in a variety of moral duties. Perhaps most importantly, they informed her and reassured her of her calling to ministry. As a teenager, when she had her first two visionary dreams, she was initially uncertain about what they meant and whether she would receive salvation. When she told Elder Stockman, a trusted member of the Adventist community in Portland, Maine, he said that her dreams were a sign that "Jesus must be preparing [her] for some special work." From then on, she began to believe she might have a special purpose. When she received her first vision in 1844, she felt honored to be "chosen as the instrument by which God would give light to His

people."[14] In 1850, she related the spiritual trials that her family had faced in a letter to her friend Sister Bates. She reported a dream in which Satan told her that she belonged to him, but an angel came to her defense and told Satan that the lamb had saved her. She concluded that the dream was a reminder to be certain of her calling and to defend against Satan.[15]

Her visions also guided White and her husband's day-to-day ministry on a practical level. In 1845, Ellen, then unmarried, was "shown" that it was her duty to travel to encourage people to maintain faith in the Advent. She took this message to heart and traveled throughout the northeastern United States. In early 1846, she learned in another vision that it was important for her, and others, to spread the message about the seventh-day Sabbath, because it would lead many to "embrace the Sabbath of the Lord." She continued on her journey, and the eventual result of this vision was that Joseph Bates, one of the staunchest supporters of the Saturday Sabbath, was persuaded to join in the Adventist ministry.[16]

These specific directives about where to go and what to do continued after Ellen and James White were married in August 1846. In November 1848, Ellen had a vision of "the proclamation of the sealing message, and of the duty of the brethren to publish the light that was shining upon our pathway." She learned that it was her husband's responsibility to create a Sabbatarian Adventist newspaper. In the summer of 1849, James

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[14] White, *Life Sketches*, 36, 68
[15] Ellen G. White to Sister Bates, September 1, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-014-1850
[16] White, *Life Sketches*, 69ff, 96

became convinced that it was time to commence publishing, but he was not sure how to begin. He left the house to find fieldwork. White explained, "As he left the house, a burden was rolled upon me, and I fainted." The people prayed for her, and she was "taken off in vision." She saw that God would make James sick if he decided to work in the field; instead he must write. He apparently heeded this vision immediately.[17]

In addition to specific guidance about writing and publishing, White often received guidance on where James and she needed to travel. For example, in February 1849, she received a vision that they were supposed to go to Dartmouth, Massachusetts. When they arrived, they realized that they had been directed there to pray for the son of a friend, who had fallen ill.[18] Later that year, she wrote about their process of determining where to spend the summer. James had previously written a letter to Utica, NY to say that they would go there, but Ellen became distracted and ill soon afterwards. They concluded that they should not send it. James threw it in the fire, and they prayed together. She felt better the next day. Then, they received a letter from Brother Belden inviting them to Rocky Hill, Connecticut for the summer, and they decided that this had been God's will for them after all.[19] Though this second example was not a vision, it is clear that White's visions, and other communications from God, played significant role in determining her family's actions.

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[17] Ibid 125-126

[18] Ibid 121

[19] Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Hastings, April 21, 1849, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-005-1849. It was that same summer in Connecticut that James White began to write the paper to spread the Adventist message. Divinely inspired or not, this decision seemed to work out for them.

White also reported that her visions directed them to put their ministry first—even before their duties as parents. By 1850, James and Ellen had two children, Henry and Edson, whom they frequently left behind when they traveled for the ministry. That year, White and her husband went to Vermont and Maine and left their children with a family friend at their home in Oswego, New York. During this journey, she missed her children and felt guilty for leaving them alone. She fell asleep in this troubled state of mind. While she slept she dreamt that "a tall angel" asked her why she was sad. She told him that she would rather stay with her children, because she felt she could "do so little good" for God. He replied that God appreciated the sacrifice she had made by leaving behind her "two beautiful flowers," but she needed to remain focused on her "duty." Though White did not record her response to this vision, it seems to have given her the strength she required to continue on the journey.[20]

James seemed to believe whole-heartedly in his wife's visions as he frequently mentioned following their instructions in his letters. Even before they were married James trusted Ellen's visions as they related to their relationship. In 1846, when they had first decided to marry, they incurred lots of opposition from people who thought that their marriage would distract them from the Adventist message. James reported, however, that Ellen "had a vision" in which "the way [was] made plain": they would be married soon.[21] He also trusted her visions after their marriage as a source of guidance for their

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[20] Ibid 131-132. It is not clear whether White believed that she had actually conversed with an angel, like Joseph Smith claimed, or simply thought of it as a mental image, like Hicks.
[21] James White to Brother Collins, August 26, 1846, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

ministerial responsibilities. In 1847 James wrote to Sister Hastings that he and Ellen had not made plans for the summer, because she had not yet been given a vision about the time of their departure: "Ellen has seen in vision that we should go west before the Lord comes; there I believe we shall go, but whether it will be in September or at a later period we cannot now decide."[22] He was willing to wait to make plans until God communicated with his wife. The next year he wrote to friends that Ellen had seen that they would "go father before [they] return[ed] to Maine." His wife had foreseen that their friends "would have a conference in Maine but [they] must go west farther before [they] returned to Maine."[23] He trusted that his wife's visions were applicable not only to them, but also to other Adventists.

White also showed how she and her family heeded divine instruction related to their health problems. In 1849, White's husband James, whom she had married in 1846, traveled without her to church meetings in New Hampshire and Maine. She worried that he might catch cholera that had been spreading throughout the area. That night she dreamt that they walked together to a river. He jumped in and told her that the water would cure "all manner of diseases." After drinking from the water in the river, she saw that his "complexion was fair and natural" and that "he seemed to possess health and

[22] James White to Elvira Hastings, August 22, 1847, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001
[23] James White to Howland Stockbridge, July 2, 1848, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

vigor." After waking up, she felt relieved, knowing that he would be well and that God "would return him to [her] in safety."[24]

White demonstrated further that they had to obey her visions, even when they were very ill. In the 1850s, James' brother Nathaniel died, and the family began to experience persistent health concerns—not for the first time in their lives. James in particular suffered from a "high fever" and was "very weak" after his brother's death. They decided to travel to Mill Grove, New York for ministerial duties, despite his illness, but he remained very sick. They worried that sickness would keep them from their divine cause. Ellen went alone to pray about their situation, and she "obtained evidence that if we should proceed on our journey to Michigan, the angel of God would go with us." They both decided to make the journey on faith, and claimed that James grew stronger as they traveled.[25] A few years later, James "was troubled with cough and soreness of lungs, and his nervous system was prostrated." They worried that he would die before repaying their debts and leaving their children fatherless. Ellen, however, "was shown that God designed to raise [James] up gradually" and that it was their responsibility to maintain faith despite Satan's attacks. After praying three times a day for James' health for a period of time, his health improved.[26]

White's visions revealed that health was an important indicator of the spiritual war between God and Satan. In 1850, their son Edson became very ill and did not recover, despite their prayers. She assumed that Satan was tempting her to doubt God's

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[24] White, *Life Sketches*, 124
[25] Ibid 148
[26] Ibid 157-8

love. Eventually her son began to recover, but "then Satan came in another form." James became "very sick" again—this time suffering from cholera. She reported that when put her hands on his head and prayed over him, "the natural color of his face returned" "immediately." She explained that she had seen that Satan would go after the members of her household to prevent them from publishing the Adventist paper. Satan apparently knew that publishing the paper would yield many conversions, and thus he had done whatever he could to stop them, including inflicting the entire White household with sickness.[27]

White interpreted her own ailments similarly. In 1853, she became very ill—suffering from "heart disease" and a possibly cancerous growth on her "left eyelid" that had become so large she could no longer see out of that eye. "A celebrated physician" told her that she would live much longer, and she lost the ability to speak and to move part of her body. Others around her began to lose faith, but to her it seemed like "Satan was striving to tear [her] from her husband and children." She told James that she was certain of her recovery. The next day, "it seemed to [her] that an angel of God had touched [her] while [she] was sleeping," and she awoke feeling totally healed recovered. Once again, she believed that the devil had not won.[28]

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[27] Ibid 138. Ellen G. White to Sister Bates, September 1, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-014-1850. I assume that White is writing about the same time period because this letter to Bates describes a similar succession of illnesses as her autobiography for this period does. Additionally, a letter written two weeks earlier to the Howlands relates a similar period of illnesses, cured by prayer. See Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Howland, August 15, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-012-1850

[28] White, *Life Sketches*, 151-152

White explained, however, that illness could also indicate God's disapproval. When the Whites were considering traveling to Utica in the summer of 1849, Ellen became ill for the rest of the day. They both believed that this meant that God did not approve of the plan. In 1850, when her son Edson was sick, she wondered why God would not answer her prayers, because she "could think of no particular thing wherein [she] had grieved the Lord." Thus, it was possible that the illness was a sign of sin.[29] In 1845, early in her ministerial career, White worried that if she proclaimed herself a visionary, she would become too proud and lose her way. She prayed that if she were supposed to enter the ministry, she would "be preserved from undue exaltation." In a vision, an angel told her that if she did, she would be given an affliction—possibly a health problem—to keep her humble.[30] For her, illness served as a strong indication of spiritual trouble, whether as an attack of Satan or as a sign of personal sin.[31]

With such frequent illness and their belief in an active spiritual realm, it is understandable that the Whites thought that Satan had sent them their illnesses. She, however, especially took to heart the lesson that health could have ethical consequences. In particular, to recover from illness a person had to have faith that he or she would be

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[29] Ibid 151. In this instance, White eventually concluded that Edson's continuing illness was not a sign of sin but of Satan's attacks.

[30] Ibid 71-2. An "affliction" does not necessarily have to refer to health issues, but White dealt with so many health issues that this is a reasonable interpretation of the word—especially given that she understood poor health to be a spiritual trial.

[31] Later in her life, White made the connection between sin and illness explicit. In discussing the paralytic man who came to Jesus seeking healing in Matthew 9:4-6, she wrote, "The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body… Before the physical malady could be healed, Christ must bring relief to the mind, and cleanse the soul from sin… The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul…" Sin was the source of physical illness, and only repentance could yield physical healing. See Ellen G. White, *The Healing Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), 76-77.

healed, and a lack of faith could lead to illness. Thus, knowing the right way to stay healthy could have moral implications. She developed this line of thinking later when she came into contact with the idea of water cure, making the Adventists' mission to spread the message of health an ethical requirement almost tantamount to spreading the faith itself.[32]

In addition to ministerial and health guidance, White's visions instructed her about her personal moral shortcomings. Unlike Hicks, whose revelations addressed specific sins, like hunting for sport and dancing, most frequently, her visions that corrected her personal conduct spoke to a lack of faith or unwillingness to carry out God's will for her. Early in her prophetic career, she struggled to express the "plain, cutting testimonies" that God required her to communicate to people, so she would often soften the message given to her. She also worried that if people did not respond to the reproof, she had done something wrong. When taken into a vision in Jesus' presence, she learned that this worry was itself a sin. When Jesus frowned at her and turned away from her, she was distraught. An angel showed her a group of people wearing torn, dirty garments, covered in blood, and he informed her that this would be "her case" if she did not tell people what God wanted her to tell them. She learned that it was a sin for her to worry about the results of doing what God commanded. She simply had to obey.[33]

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[32] White's belief in the direct action of Satan on the body seems to suggest that she did not believe in the separation of mind and body the way that Hicks did. I have not found any clear evidence about her beliefs on this subject.

[33] White, *Life Sketches*, 90-91

In fact, White's visions reportedly told her that even to doubt her calling was sinful. Early in her visionary career, some people criticized her by saying that "all the exercises [of] holy men… were only the effect of mesmerism or the deception of Satan."[34] In the face of such criticism, she "was sometimes tempted to doubt [her] own experience." This doubt plagued her to the point that, on one occasion, she reportedly tried to resist the Holy Spirit when she felt a visionary state coming on. Even so, she was momentarily "lost to everything around" her and given a vision. She saw that she had sinned by not trusting God's power, and she would be dumbstruck for twenty-four hours as punishment. Then, "A card was held up before [her], on which were written in letters of gold the chapter and verse of fifty texts of Scripture." After emerging from the visionary state, she looked them up in the bible. The next day she felt her tongue "loosed" and she began to praise God. "After that [she] dared not doubt, or for a moment resist the power of God, however others might think of me."[35]

White's visions spurred her on in her calling as a visionary and showed her when she had failed to live up to this calling. In 1867, White recalled a portion of a vision that she had previously received in 1865, which reminded her of the importance of seeking only God's approval. In this vision, she saw "a cluster of trees" in a circle. A vine had grown over these trees, and was supported by them. "The trees [were] swaying to and fro" and "one branch after another of the vine was shaken from its support, until the vine" was no longer held up by the trees. An angel came to the vine and told it not to cling to

[34] Ibid 88
[35] Ibid 89-90

the trees, but to God alone. Another angel told White that she was like this vine: she had clung to human support as the vine had clung to the trees. She was inspired, once again, to uphold her duty of "bearing [her] testimony to the people"—even when others blamed her for causing trouble.[36]

By showing the range of possible divine guidance from her visions, White subtly argued that all Sabbatarian Adventists might be subject to similar instruction from her visions. In all of these examples, she demonstrated that obeying her visions yielded positive results, whereas ignoring them resulted in problems. When she was tempted to doubt or to ignore her calling, God punished her, for instance, by making her temporarily mute. Submission, however, produced good things—conversions, health, and the ability to fulfill spiritual duties. Ultimately, by modeling obedience, she suggested that all Adventists should be open to listening to God's visionary direction—even when it came to them indirectly through a visionary leader like her.

VISIONARY PROCESS

Nevertheless, whereas some people within the Sabbatarian Adventist community immediately responded well to White's visions and their ethical discipline, others objected to the very existence of her visions. While some worried that her visions were simply unscriptural, others thought that they were diabolical in origin, akin to the unbiblical practice of mesmerism. Although it remained implicit in the descriptions of each vision, her explication of her visionary process was important. By demonstrating

[36] Ibid 175-177

how her visions occurred, she contended that they had divine origins, eventually allowing her to formulate an informal theory of religious experiences.

Despite the fact that White became the only prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, her dreams and visions were not totally unique within her faith community. She was raised attending Methodist camp revival meetings at which it was common for attendees to shout, shake, and even faint during their worship as a result of their connection with the Holy Spirit. The group settings for her earliest visions during worship or prayer were ripe for a young woman to have intense physical reactions. The fact that she had visions would have made her stand out, but would not have been entirely surprising to her community.[37] She also acknowledged that she was not the first Adventist to receive visions. Her relative, Hazen Foss, reportedly had visions that he refused to tell anyone. Adventists John and Charles Pearson heard about William Foy, a black man who had visions in Boston in 1841-2. They convinced him to publish his visions in 1844—one year before White published hers. What seemed to make the difference over time was the content of her visions and their sustained presence in her life.[38]

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[37] Graybill argues that White's ecstatic visions were simply considered a "more exotic" form of the emotional religious experience that all Adventists experienced. Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century" (PhD Dissertation: The Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 91. On Methodist religious experiences see above footnote ten.

[38] Graybill claims that Seventh-day Adventists accepted White's visions for two reasons: first, her experiences made sense within the context of ecstatic worship practices of the 1850s; and second, the content of her visions appealed to their spiritual needs. Graybill 87ff. I tend to agree with his basic argument about the appeal of White's visions. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept his contention that her visions were viewed uncritically as a normal extension of typical worship experiences, if for no other reason than that White and her husband had to go to such lengths to convince other Adventists that she was not influenced by the devil.

White's visionary experiences can be distinguished into two broad categories: how she entered the vision; and the content of the vision. She tended to be "taken off in vision" through either a dream state or through prayer in either a private or group setting. The content of a vision could be theological or personal—directed specifically at her, her family, or other individuals.[39] White's dreams—whether in a dream or awake—addressed her personal anxieties and taught her how to act. Her visions also shared various physical side effects, such as loss of consciousness, feats of strength, and altered sight.

Though she reported dreams much less frequently, White's dreams were clearly important to her, because they initiated her entrance into public ministry and occurred at times of great personal distress.[40] Prior to the official founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863, she recorded just four dreams in her autobiography. Her first two dreams were those related above, which prophesied what might happen if she did not become sanctified and which reassured her of the power of faith, and her third and fourth dreams related to her family.

White's prophetic dreams tended to happen in a similar pattern, as responses to issues about which she felt very distressed. When she was a teenager, her first two dreams resulted from a period of intense soul-searching and high anxiety about whether she would receive salvation. Her dreams about her husband's health and leaving behind

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[39] White also had visions related to church structure and organizational issues. I touch on these below in my discussion of her influence in the social mores of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For more, see Graybill 136-163.

[40] Graybill explains that in her later years, White's waking, ecstatic visions dropped off considerably in the 1870s and stopped altogether after that, being replaced by dreams. Graybill 84-87. I focus only on the years leading up to the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the years immediately after that. During this time, White reported waking visions most frequently. Of course, it is possible that she had many other dreams that she never recorded.

her children came to her when she was very worried about her family. Like Elias Hicks' dreams, her dreams came to her exclusively during sleep, and they were mostly personal. Her dreams about confessing her sins to the bleeding lamb and meeting Jesus, however, hinted at spiritual issues concerning other people. For instance, the people who remained outside the temple of the lamb probably represented sinners who wanted to keep her from approaching the temple at all. Additionally, in the dream about the staircase, the people who fell off were likely people who had lost their faith.[41] Nevertheless, these two dreams primarily addressed her concerns about her own faith and salvation.[42]

White's dreams caused problems for her when trying to persuade Adventists of her legitimacy. In the 1850s, James White and other Adventists published a number of articles about the appropriate interpretation of dreams in their periodical, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. In 1851, the editors claimed that dreams could come from one of three places: daily life, the devil, or the Holy Spirit. Noting numerous instances of prophetic dreams in the Bible, they claimed it would be wrong to reject outright the possibility of divinely inspired dreams. Nevertheless, people should be wary of assuming that all such sights had a divine message within. They explained that God provided

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[41] I say what these people "probably" represented because White did not supply any interpretation of these people in her autobiography.

[42] As a religious dreamer, White was not alone. The Bible is rife with accounts of prophetic dreams, inspiring and guiding the believer. Joseph was famous for his prophetic dreams, which got him into trouble with his family, but helped him rise to power in Egypt. Peter had a visionary trance that let him know that the message of Christ was intended for all people, not just for Jews. Genesis 37-50; Acts 10: 9-23. Broader Protestant culture also had a tradition of prophetic dreams. Paul Bunyan's seventh-century book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was written as a reported dream, detailing the Christian's struggle to overcome sin. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, Cynthia Wall ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2009). In the United States, Protestants published a number of pamphlets detailing the visionary dreams of Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ann Kirschner, "Tending to Edify, Astonish, and Instruct: Published Narratives of Spiritual Dreams and Visions in the Early Republic," *Early American Studies* (Spring 2003), 198-229.

dreams "to comfort, correct, or to instruct in extreme trials or dangers" but not "to guide in general duties."[43] Though some of White's dreams might appear to have been related to "general duties," she nevertheless believed in the insight they provided, and by presenting them in her autobiography, she implied to her readers that they, too, should find them trustworthy.

The pattern of White's waking visions paralleled that of her visionary dreams. Before a vision occurred, she or the people around her would be concerned with a practical, moral, or theological problem. Before her first vision, Adventists were worried about how to interpret Miller's failed prediction of the Second Coming. Prayer about—or sometimes intense contemplation of—the problem would then cause White to be "taken off in vision," and the content of the vision would typically relate directly to the issue at hand. When she prayed with others about the Great Disappointment, she was shown what would happen if the Adventists remained faithful. Finally, she and her companions were supposed to learn a moral, spiritual, or practical lesson from the visions. In the case of her first vision, they were inspired to greater faithfulness, and they realized that they needed to follow the Adventist path to receive a seal of God's favor and salvation at the end of days.

In addition to a general pattern of reception, White's visions shared certain physical characteristics. For instance, she regularly mentioned losing consciousness during her visionary states, and she seemed to be unaware of anything happening outside

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[43] James White et al, eds, "Dreams," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. I, no. 9 (Paris, ME: April 21, 1851), 70.

her vision. In the vision in which she saw scriptures on a card, she explained that she was briefly "lost to everything." In her first public vision, she lost consciousness of the material world as she saw visions of the heavens. On another occasion in April 1847, she attended a prayer meeting at the home of Stockbridge Howland. They all felt the Holy Spirit fall upon them, and she was "lost to earthly things, and was wrapped in a visions of God's glory." At a conference in 1848 at Volney, New York, White had a vision of the theological errors of some of the people there in which she was again "lost to earthly things."[44]

White's loss of conscious was inextricably linked to a second characteristic of many of her visions—their stunning visual content. In one dream, she witnessed the rejuvenation of her husband's health in a body of water. In various dreams and waking visions, she saw Jesus, the path to heaven, the salvation of the faithful, and glowing scriptures. The colors of earth often paled in comparison, leaving her alienated from her life on earth.

White's visions often prompted unusual physical side effects, like paralysis. James White described another incident in 1851 when his wife received a vision in the presence of people who doubted her visions. He wrote to the church in Jackson, Michigan that "Ellen fainted[,] was raised up by faith[, and] taken off in vision" in which she saw

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[44] White, *Life Sketches*, 100, 110-111. In fact, this tendency to lose awareness of the world around her predated her first visionary experience. Not long after her conversion, White felt the Spirit prompting her to pray publicly—something she was very nervous to do. She soon attended a prayer meeting at which her "voice arose in prayer before [she] was aware of it." Her soul felt lifted of its "burden and agony," and "everything seemed shut out from [her] but Jesus and his glory, and [she] lost consciousness of what was passing around [her]." During this prayer, she entered a catatonic state, and she was unable to be moved that night. Ibid 37-38

an unfaithful brother.[45] Another observer of the same vision wrote to the church in Dartmouth that White "fainted and fell lifeless." After they prayed for her, she revived, and then went into a visionary state. During this state, the observer reported that "Bro. W. took her [White] all stiff through to rooms, and put her on a bed. She was in vision say ¾ of an hour."[46] White's "stiffness" suggests another catatonic state. Fainting, weakness, and paralysis were sometimes essential to her visionary process.

In some instances, however, her visions yielded improvements in her health or even feats of strength. She claimed that after her vision of scriptures on a card, she held a pen and wrote better than ever before.[47] James once explained that after a fainting spell, "Ellen came out of vision, then shouted till she went off in vision again." This shouting marked an unusual moment of spiritual power. During their ministerial journey in 1848, the Whites stopped to spend the night with some friends who lived in Hannibal, New York. In the morning, she entered a visionary state when everyone was present. She appeared to be unconscious, but she picked up a Bible, "held it before the Lord, talked from it." Then she gave it to the one person there who did not agree with their beliefs about the Sabbath. According to James, after giving the Bible to this young man, Ellen

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[45] James White to Brethren in Jackson, November 11, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

[46] Unknown author to Believers in Dartmouth, November 7, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001. I assume that James White and this unknown author were writing about the same incident for a number of reasons. First, their letters were written around the same time in early November. Second in both letters, the authors mention having to address the opposition of a certain "Brother Smith." Finally, Ellen White wrote a letter to Brother and Sister Howland on November 12, 1851 in which she described fainting, being prayed for, and having a vision that dealt with the wrong beliefs of an "S. Smith", who doubted her visions. See Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Howland, November 12, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-008-1851

[47] She claimed that after being commanded to write by an angel in this vision, she was able to hold a pen steadily for the first time. She retained the ability to write thereafter. White, *Life Sketches*, 89-90

remained in the vision for "one and a half hours, in which time she did not breathe at all."[48] This vision had given her unusual strength, and, apparently, caused her to hold her breath for an incredibly long time.

In addition to feats of strength, White's visions and prayers were sometimes accompanied with other unusual phenomena. After her first public vision, she realized that God had called her to travel in the ministry. She worried that no one in her family would be able to accompany her, and she did not want to travel alone. The members of her fellowship thought that she was depressed, so they suggested that they should all pray for her. She claimed that while they were praying for her, "Something that seemed like a ball of fire struck [her] right over the heart." After that her "strength was taken away and [she] fell to the floor." She saw a vision of angels, and a voice told her to carry the message. One of the elders there, Father Pearson, reportedly witnessed the ball of fire as well. He had doubted her visions in the past, but said that seeing the flame convinced him that her visions were true.[49]

Finally, the intensity of White's ecstatic and visionary states left her disconnected from the material world. When she became catatonic during prayer prior to her first vision, she went through a period of several months in which she felt totally happy. She was so full of Jesus' love that she "felt no disposition to engage in common conversation with any one." After her first public vision, she explained that "this world" appeared

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[48] White, *Life Sketches*, 112. See also James White to Brother and Sister Hastings, August 26, 1848, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

[49] White, *Life Sketches*, 71. I have not been able to locate Father Pearson's corroborating story outside of its presence in White's autobiography.

"dark" and was covered in "gloom." She claimed that she "had seen a better world"—heaven—that had "spoiled this [world]" for her. In 1851, White described a vision of Jesus in heaven to a friend: "…after I came out of vision this world looked desolate to me, the views that God has given me have spoiled this world for me. Nothing here looks lovely."[50]

Similarly, White's physical experiences of her visions could create a sense of longing for a closer connection with God and for heaven. She explained to her friends the Lovelands, "At times I feel the power of God even in my flesh and yet I am not satisfied. I want to plunge deeper and deeper in the ocean of God's love and be wholly swallowed up in Him." She wrote to the Howlands that, as she thought about those things, her "vision c[ame] up before [her]" and she could hear "the words of the angel" saying, "Get ready, get ready, get ready…."[51] The experience of the Holy Spirit allowed her to recall a past vision—something that happened to Hicks on occasion as well. This connection to God must have been common for White, as she described an emotional build up to a vision to her friend Harriet Hastings in August 1851: "I had a deep plunge in the ocean of God's love…. The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, my whole being was ravished with the glory of God, and I was taken off in vision."[52]

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[50] Ellen G. White to Sister Harriet Hastings, August 11, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-003-1851

[51] Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Howland, August 15, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-012-1850

[52] Ellen G. White to Sister Harriet Hastings, August 11, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-003-1851

BATTLING MESMERISM AND PROVING DIVINE INSPIRATION

The physical process and side effects of White's visions were important in light of the fact that some of her early detractors claimed that she entered her visionary states by mesmeric manipulation. Mesmerism was the philosophy that people could influence or be influenced by others through a subtle fluid existed in the universe connecting everything and everyone.[53] People might have seen similarities between her visions and a mesmeric trance, because she exhibited behaviors like people under its sway, especially when she lost consciousness or acted involuntarily. Though she and her fellow Sabbatarian Adventists believed that there was genuine spiritual power in mesmerism, they believed that the devil was behind it. Thus, in order to solidify her position as a visionary leader, she would have to prove that mesmerists were not controlling her.[54] Through her conflicts with various mesmerists, she depicted herself as triumphant over the power of evil, rather than subject to it, and she began to articulate a way of identifying genuine religious experience.

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[53] Franz Anton Mesmer, an Austrian doctor, invented the theory of animal magnetism in the eighteenth century. It became popular in the United States in the early nineteenth century. Robert C. Fuller, *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); J. Gordon Melton, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 145.

[54] Ann Taves also argues that Seventh-day Adventists incorporated mesmerism into their belief structure by "integrating it as a demonic element into their cosmology." In other words, Ellen White and her supporters dealt with the apparent similarity between her visionary states and mesmeric trances by identifying the mesmerists as evil. See Taves, 132, 161-165. I do not disagree with Taves' interpretation, but I expand the discussion by exploring how Adventists differentiated genuine experiences from false and by situating mesmerism within a broader conversation about White's theory of visionary experience. Of course, not all Protestants found mesmerism or spiritualism to be evil. Indeed many saw spiritualism as a legitimate extension of their belief in heaven and as definitive proof of Christianity. See Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 199ff. Other Protestants joined in the Seventh-day Adventists in their critique of mesmerism. These liberal, socially elite Protestants, however, objected to mesmerism because it was a harmful hoax. Taves 122ff

White described confrontations with a number of people who were potentially under the diabolic influence of mesmerism in which she was victorious over their evil influence. For instance, in 1845, before their marriage, Ellen (then Harmon) and James White were traveling together through New Hampshire, when they encountered a pair of male Adventists in Claremont, who claimed to have achieved perfect sanctification. Ellen and James witnessed, however, their utter neglect of their wives and children, so they tried to reason with these men about the necessity demonstrating their sanctification through action. The sister of one of the men met with Ellen in private to talk about her "consecration to God" and possibly tried to use mesmeric influence on her: "While talking, she held my hand in hers, and with the other softly stroked my hair." She feared "the unholy influences which this attractive young woman was seeking to exercise over me with her fair speeches and gentle caresses." They sensed evil power working in this woman, with her mesmeric influence, as well as the men there with their false teachings about sanctification.[55]

Not long after that, the Whites attended a meeting at the home of Brother Collier, also near Claremont, and the same two men came as well. Collier expressed his hope that Ellen and James would be able to discern what kind of spirit really inhabited the men. During the meeting, Ellen stood up to pray, but the presence of the men dampened her spirit and cast a dark cloud over her. James cast out the dark spirit from the meeting, and she was able to speak again. A second time, she experienced a dark cloud over her, and he cast out the bad spirit once more. At the end of the meeting, James told Collier that he

[55] White, *Life Sketches*, 79-81

thought the men really spoke for the devil. Collier confirmed that he also thought the men had a bad spirit—something like mesmerism.[56]

To emphasize that she was not a mesmerist herself, White explained that she believed that it was the Adventists' spiritual duty to combat these mesmeric and other evil forces. In August 1850, White described a vision she had had during a meeting with brothers Rhodes and Lillis. In this vision she saw that magicians were at work as they had been when Moses came before Pharaoh. It was important for Israel—meaning the Adventist community—to oppose the magicians by singing and shouting in the battle against "the powers of darkness." In order to win this battle, an angel told her that Israel needed more faith in order to have more power.[57]

Despite her commitment to opposing mesmerism and other evil forces in the world, White sometimes was accused of practicing mesmerism by skeptics and critics. Even after her vision of scriptures on a card, White continued to fear mesmerism's effect on her until a particularly powerful showdown four years later. In 1850, Ellen and James

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[56] Ibid 81-82

[57] In the 1870s, White began write a series of books about the history of the conflict between God and Satan that eventually became the "Conflict of the Ages Series." By the time she had begun writing these books, she focused more on spiritualism than mesmerism as a sign of evil spirits at work in the world. In the fourth volume, *Acts of the Apostles*, she compares spiritualism to the "heathen superstitions" of the time of the Apostles: "Through spiritualism many of the sick, the bereaved, the curious, are communicating with evil spirits…. The magicians of heathen times have their counterpart in the spiritualistic mediums, the clairvoyants, and the fortune-tellers of today. The mystic voices that spoke at Endor and at Ephesus are still by their lying words misleading the children of men." In the final volume of the series, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, White devoted an entire chapter to discussing spiritualism. She detailed how Satan used "a channel regarded as sacred…for the accomplishment of his purposes." Rather than dismissing spiritualism as mere "trickery" she argued that there had been genuine instances that were "the direct work of evil angels" that fooled people by claiming to speak with the dead. See Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Tellico Plains, TN: Digital Inspiration, 2006), 289-290 and *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 551-562.

attended a conference in Vermont at the home of E.P. Butler. He and the other Adventists there reported being "perplexed and tried by the false teachings and wild fanaticism of a group of people who were claiming entire sanctification." The leaders of these people also "practised mesmerism," and White thought that it was through their "mesmeric influence" that they had "secured a large degree of sympathy from some of the grown-up children of our brethren."

In her description of the resolution of this event, White again underscored that she was not be under mesmeric influence. The Whites organized a meeting at the home of Brother Lovejoy, and the leaders of this mesmeric group attended with two women, "dressed in white linen, with their long black hair hanging loose about their shoulders." During this meeting, Ellen began to rebuke the members of this group. While she spoke, one of the men "kept his eyes fastened upon [her], as mesmerists had done before." This time, however, she claimed to have "no fear of his mesmeric influence," as God gave her "strength…to rise above their satanic power." Later, they were all forcibly removed from the meeting. One of the men reentered the room, but "the power of God fell upon [James]," and he told the man that God did not want him there. "The power of God filled the room," causing the man stumble, stagger across the room, fall against the wall, and leave the house. White reported, "After this meeting the false and wily professors of perfect holiness were never able to reestablish their power over our brethren." Although

she reported challenges from Satan throughout her life, she claimed that mesmerism was never a problem again.[58]

Although White never provided a clear exposition of how to differentiate between the influence of the Holy Spirit and of mesmerism, her autobiography hints at the ways that she did. For example, in her description of the various mesmerists she encountered, she mentioned behaviors that she never attributed to herself. In 1845 when she sat with an "attractive young" female mesmerist, the woman held one of her hands and stroked her hair while speaking in a soothing manner to her. White thought that these "caresses" were indicative of her attempts to exercise demonic influence over her. Five years later at the home of Brother Lovejoy, she noted that one of the men disturbing their meeting, "kept his eyes fastened upon [her], as mesmerists had done before." Even though she came from a culture in which the laying on of hands to promoted healing, she recognized something different in the manner of the mesmerists.

In addition to identifiable mannerisms, White associated mesmerists with various false doctrines and improper religious practices. The group in 1845 had demonstrated neglect of their wives and children. The mesmerists in 1850 claimed to have achieved total sanctification—a claim that she found implausible because of their actions. Additionally, they had fomented fanatical behavior during worship. In her opinion, people guided by the Holy Spirit would not have acted like them.

White undoubtedly faced charges of mesmerism for a number of reasons. There were, after all, certain similarities between her behaviors in a visionary state and people

[58] Ibid 133-135.

under mesmeric influence. The fact that she lost consciousness and sometimes walked and interacted with people while insensible was perhaps evidence of evil spiritual influence. While her ecstatic states and fainting spells certainly existed within the range of permissible spiritual experiences, they fell at the more extreme end due to her visions. Thus, it made sense that people would not trust them and accuse her of unholy influence. In her defense, she could appeal to her moral character and the significance of the content revealed to her—the very same criteria by which she judged the mesmerists she encountered. She and James also pointed out that she was capable of and frequently experienced visions while alone. Though they did not say so explicitly, this seemed to be a way to prove that her experiences were genuinely spirit-led. A mesmerists' trance could only occur in a setting with two or more people: the mesmerist and his or her subject.[59]

WHITE'S "THEORY" OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

White was frequently called upon to defend her visions to people who had not experienced anything like them. She was accused not only of mesmerism, but of favoritism and of outright deceit. She was not a systematic theologian, and she did not develop the theology that Seventh-day Adventists employed to legitimize her prophetic visions. Nevertheless, she had a personal theory of religious experiences. Her writings demonstrated that she understood the world in terms of a battle between good and evil in which the Holy Spirit and evil spirits competed for influence over individual souls. Through her battles with mesmerists, White had become convinced that holy, proper

[59] Graybill makes the observation that White's claims to solitary visions were likely a defense against accusations of mesmeric influence. He also points that White and her supporters appealed to her good character to uphold her legitimacy as a prophet. Graybill 100, 104.

religious experiences were identifiable by their good results and lack of emotional fanaticism. She also believed that each person must experience the Holy Spirit independently in order to trust its leadings. Ultimately she claimed that her visions were trustworthy based on these criteria, and she insisted that all Adventists should submit to them, just as she had.

In White's understanding, the Holy Spirit was an active spiritual force that induced emotional outpourings of faith and repentance of sin. Most commonly, evidence of its power was found during worship. For example, at a meeting in Paris, Maine in 1849, she explained that "the power of God descended something as it did on the day of Pentecost, and five or six who had been deceived and led into error and fanaticism, fell prostrate to the floor." One young woman was filled with the spirit and asked the children whether they would be joining her in Heaven. Then "all fell upon their knees, some were crying for mercy, others for a closer walk with God, and some for salvation, full and free." Everyone in the meeting began to confess their sins to each other, leading to "such a scene of confession and pleading with God for forgiveness" that they had "seldom witnessed." After a long period of struggle, "victory was given unto us, and darkness and unbelief fled away."[60]

Just as the White believed that Holy Spirit worked for good in the world, she believed Satan and evil spirits also worked in the world to tempt believers and to lead sinners even farther from the truth. She thought that Satan was trying to prevent people

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[60] White, *Life Sketches*, 127. White described this scene in a letter to Mary Nichols, but it survives in copied form. See excerpt from a letter written by Mary Nichols to Sister Collins, December 12, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

from learning the "present truth" through several means: spiritualism, mesmerism, fallen Adventists, and illness.[61] She saw his power in her family's frequent bouts of illness just as often as she witness his influence in her confrontations with mesmerists.

White provided extensive advice on proper experience of the Holy Spirit and on identifying genuine spiritual experiences from false. One important component of her advice was to avoid religious fanaticism.[62] In 1845, she visited a group of believers in Exeter, Maine. She was prompted to tell the people what "had been shown [her] in regard to some fanatical persons who were present." She said that "they were deceived in thinking that they were actuated by the Spirit of God."[63] Even though she participated in a Christian community that recognized the legitimacy of being filled with the Holy Spirit, casting out demons, spiritual healing, and prophetic visions, she still identified certain behaviors and fanatical, and therefore, inappropriate, false, and even harmful expressions of faith.

For White, fanaticism entailed unnecessary and overly loud "noise" that seemed more about provoking opponents than praising God. In her autobiography, she described "meeting fanaticism" among the believers in Portland, Maine. She explained that some of them thought that "religion consisted in great excitement and noise," and "they would talk in a manner that would irritate unbelievers," causing them to hate the believers.

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[61] Ellen White to Brother and Sister Hastings, April 21, 1849, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-005-1849

[62] Fanaticism can be a slippery term. Various Christian groups have employed it to describe the worship practices of others whom they considered to display too much enthusiasm in worship—this could mean frenetic worship practices, loud noises made during worship, ecstatic movements, etc. Nevertheless, one group's fanaticism could be another group's orthodoxy. Ann Taves has discussed competing ideas about religious enthusiasm and fanaticism in the United States. See, in general, Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*.

[63] White, *Life Sketches*, 73

Sometimes the believers were prevented from meeting because of this behavior, which she called "injudicious." They would "rejoice that they suffered persecution," which only made unbelievers hate them more.[64]

White argued that fanaticism focused more on evoking emotional rather than authentic spiritual experiences during worship. In 1859, she wrote about a vision in which she had seen a "fanatical spirit" that had overtaken their group in Connecticut. She saw their meetings in which "some were burdened, crying out in distress." There were "shrieks" and some were "pressing… individuals to confess." Some were "fearing to speak to this one or the other who had been reproved or held in doubt by these exercises and burdens." Their worship practices inhibited honest relationships. She believed that "God's frown" was upon this kind of worship and that "the enemy meant to carry out his object and drive [them] to utter distraction and confusion."[65]

White thought that an important antidote to fanaticism was not to seek emotion for emotion's sake. In 1851, she reported a vision of "an unclean spirit and an unholy spirit" that "moved strongly on the feelings" of a particular congregation. They had not recognized that it was an evil spirit, because "they trusted to feeling, to an influence or power that was brought to bear upon their feelings." She admonished them, "Feelings is as unsafe a guide as you can follow. You make altogether too much of a happy flight of feeling or a shouting time. These times will come, but they are not always an undoubted evidence that we are right." Emotion alone could not be trusted as a sign of God's

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[64] Ibid 85

[65] Ellen White to Brethren Graham, September 24, 1859, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, G-007-1859

pleasure. She told them that, if they would begin to identify spiritual gifts in a broader sense, instead of looking only for emotional expression during worship, God would be pleased.[66]

In 1854 White explained that any attempts to force feelings or to privilege feelings as an expression of faith were a form of fanaticism. She wrote to a group of believers "…faith and feeling should not be confounded together, they are distinct as the east is from the west." She opined that, rather than trusting to feelings, "in the darkest hours it [is] then we should exercise faith and… press our faith through the dark clouds to be the throne of God and claim the blessing of Heaven." Only after this process of grappling with faith, "feeling, the evidence has come and it is feeling that has swallowed up the faith…." Faith and feeling were not synonymous, and feeling should not be the constant expression of faith, but only the result of a long struggle with sin or darkness. White's understanding of faith had clearly matured since her youth when she fretted about her salvation, because she had not had emotional sanctification.[67]

Despite her caution about emotional experiences, White claimed that it was important to have regular communion with the Holy Spirit. In 1857, White wrote to her friends the Lovelands to encourage them to maintain their faith despite recent challenges. She argued that oftentimes people allowed religion "to dwell too much in an iron case"

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[66] Ellen White to Brother Pierce, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, P-002-1851. I have not been able to identify with certainty where Brother Pierce's community was located. It is possible that this is a "Brother I. Pierce" from Exeter. See "Letter from Brother Chapman," *The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, Vol. 7, No 12 (Boston, April 24, 1844), 94.6.

[67] Ellen G. White to Dear Friends, October 12, 1854, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-005-1854

by allowing "a form of godliness without the power." She thought that "an outpouring of the Spirit of God" would help to solve spiritual problems and enable believers "to sacrifice to God with the voice of thanksgiving…" She mused about the necessity of regular contact with the Holy Spirit: "Our souls often need to drink at the fountain in order to be refreshed and flourish in the Lord." To her, a religion "without vital godliness" was "vain."[68] Communion with God's Spirit was an essential part of religious practice, because it helped the Christian to experience the faith at its fullest.

White cautioned, however, that each person should be certain of his or her own spirituality. In 1858, she reported a vision in which she had seen "the wretched state of things in New York." The strife among the believers in Oswego had occurred because "some ha[d] placed themselves in a position to watch others, when God ha[d] not placed them on the watchtower at all." These self-elevated people had become overly critical of others' "things in the house, in dress, [and in] manners" and had hurt them with their criticism. She explained that while it was appropriate for preachers to speak the truth, when they attempted "to bend the individual to see as they see, to feel as they feel, they t[ook] upon them the work that belongs to the Spirit of God." Indeed, she argued that such nitpicking would cause people to be more concerned with pleasing "the servants of God," and their behavior would not be based on personal conviction, but on "the one that reproved them." Much like Hicks, she argued that it was of the utmost importance for each person to "have an individual, independent experience" that would lead him or her

[68] Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Loveland, January 24, 1857, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, L-013-1857

to God, not to other people. Ultimately, she admonished, "…it was notions and ideas that some think others must be brought to that ha[d] destroyed spirituality and independent experience in New York."[69] Thus, while she believed in truth, she thought that it was essential for each person to have this experience of truth for him- or herself.

To identify a legitimate encounter with the Holy Spirit, White claimed to apply to herself the same standards she applied to others. For instance, it was of utmost importance to demonstrate that God, not Satanic forces, had inspired her visions by proving that she did not have previous human guidance for her visions. In a letter to Joseph Bates in 1847, White explained that her vision about "the midnight cry" had occurred to her prior to her knowledge of James Turner's theological arguments in favor of it.[70] While meeting with other former Millerites in December 1844, she had seen that the midnight cry had already occurred in October 1844. She claimed that she was alone when she had this vision and feared sharing it with everyone, because she thought that they would oppose her. Even though Turner had already written a paper on the topic, White assured Bates that she had not read it before her vision; nor had she spoken to Turner about it until the next day, when she learned of his sermon. She argued that her

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[69] Ellen White to Brother Woodruff, 1858, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, W-002-1858

[70] The concept of the "midnight cry" was based on an interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:13. In this story ten virgins awaited their bridegroom's arrival. Five of them had prepared for his arrival by bringing lamps filled with oil. The other five were unprepared. When the bridegroom's arrival was announced at midnight—"the midnight cry"—the five unprepared virgins went into the streets to purchase oil. By the time they returned to the home, the door had been shut and they were not welcomed in by the bridegroom. Millerites, and many other Christians, took this parable to relate to the end time, when Jesus will return to earth. They thought that, like the five prepared virgins, only those faithful to the Adventist message would be welcomed to heaven. White's vision was part of a process that helped Seventh-day Adventists to believe that October 22, 1844 was the actual date of the midnight cry, warning of Christ's imminent return to earth. Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

visions could be trusted because they resulted from her independent experience of this doctrine—not others' experience, nor mesmeric influence.[71]

Indeed, White believed she was shown the truth of people's spiritual conditions regardless of her feelings toward or knowledge of those individuals. In the same 1847 letter to Bates, she claimed confidence in her visions: "I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man. I knew not how to write so that others could read it till God gave me my visions." In 1851, White reassured the Lovelands that that neither her opinions, nor their stories about Brother Hollis had influenced her visions about him. She argued, "I know that if you told me anything it affected me not or I could not remember it, but dear sister, what if you have said ever so much, would that affect the visions that God gives me?" She reminded them that if others could influence her visions, then "the visions are nothing." At the end of her letter, she reaffirmed, "My opinion has nothing to with what God has shown me in vision."[72]

CONCLUSION

White asserted that her visions were the result of independent experience of God's power; they had nothing to do with her feelings. She thought that if she were subject to their authority, despite her personal feelings, then others should be as well. Nevertheless, in the early years of their movement, Sabbatarian Adventists and potential Adventists

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[71] Ellen G. White to Brother Bates, July 13, 1847, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-003-1847

[72] Ellen White to Brother and Sister Loveland, April 1, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, L-006-1851. Of course, claims like this made Adventists suspicious when they felt certain that she must have had previous knowledge or seemed to have plagiarized some of her teachings.

expressed doubts about her visions. Some worried that her visions went beyond what was allowed by the scriptures. Others accepted the visions in a general sense, but rebelled against White's leadership when her visions hit too close to home. Throughout the 1850s and 60s, White, her husband, and her most loyal supporters undertook a campaign to persuade their fellow believers that visions did not supersede scripture that complemented the defense laid out in her autobiography. Alongside that endeavor, however, White crusaded for her leadership by disciplining the sins of individuals that she claimed had been revealed to her in visions. In the end, though her power was by no means absolute, she managed to secure a significant share of influence by getting Adventist leaders to admit their personal sins against her and to adopt her social vision to minister to the world through public healthcare.

Chapter Five: Visionary Ethics: Ellen White and her Community

'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Look at the lives of those who have opposed the visions. How long to they hold fast the truth? 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'
Ellen G. White[1]

Looking back on her youth, Ellen White recalled her involvement in the Millerite movement as "the happiest year of [her] life." During the former deist[2] Miller's visits to her home state of Maine, "special meetings were appointed" to enable "sinners…to seek their Saviour and prepare for the fearful events soon to take place." After attending many of these meetings, she went forward "to the anxious seat" with the "hundreds" of other people.[3] She worried that she "could never be worthy to be called a child of God." Feeling isolated, she thought, "it would be impossible to make any one understand [her] feelings." One day in 1840, however, she finally experience the "spiritual ecstasy" she desired as proof of her conversion, and she officially joined the community of Millerites, who believed that the Second Coming would occur within their lifetimes. Her time in this

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[1] Ellen G. White to Friends in Mansville & Vicinity, circa 1856, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-020-1860

[2] Miller became deist by reading Thomas Paine, David Hume, Ethan Allen, and Voltaire. After participating in the War of 1812, however, he concluded that it would be better to believe in the Bible than to think that life ended at death. He moved back to his childhood home and returned to the Baptist Church in which he had been raised. He converted to Christianity when he was struck with a sense of "the character of the Saviour" and his goodness and compassion. William Miller, *Apology and Defence* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1845), 4 in Wayne R. Judd, "William Miller: Disappointed Prophet," in Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds, *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 19.

[3] The anxious seat was a common revival tactic. The first row, or rows, at a revival would be reserved for sinners who were close to conversion. The minister would often address his remarks especially toward them in hopes of inciting an emotional conversion experience.

movement taught her to value a close-knit spiritual community, especially one bonded in joyful expectation of Christ's imminent return.[4]

After her conversion, White became even more active in spreading the message of the impending Advent. As 1843 approached, people, who did not believe in Miller's predictions about Christ's return, often forced Millerites out of their home churches.[5] Though they found this distressing at first, they eventually accepted the mantle of persecution, and they came to think of themselves as the remnant of true believers, who had heeded the "midnight cry" and would be saved when Jesus came.[6] They condemned not only Catholics and other non-Christians, but all other Protestants, for following Satan by failing to recognize the truth of their beliefs.[7] White put worldly concerns aside, and focused her energy on spreading this message. She believed that God "would answer [her] prayers" for the souls of people who were not saved.

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[4] Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by herself; With a Sketch of her Subsequent Labors and of her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 20-24.

[5] David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1985), 75, 81. Miller believed that all metaphors, or "figures," in the Bible had the same meaning across various prophecies. To understand what the "sanctuary" meant in Daniel 8, he compared it to other prophecies about sanctuaries, finding that God sometimes called the earth his sanctuary. To him, it was logical to think that cleansing the sanctuary meant that Christ would return to purify the earth from sin. He also believed that in Biblical prophecy a "day" did not actually refer to a literal day, but to a period of a year. This was a common interpretative tactic for scholars of the Bible based on Numbers 14:34, which said, "even forty days, each day for a year," and Ezekiel 4:6, which said, "I have appointed thee each day for a year." Based on these scriptures, Miller thought he could predict the time of Jesus' return, as long as he knew from when to begin counting the 2300 years. The answer to this question was resolved by relying on historians' conclusion that the ram in the first part of the prophecy of Daniel 8 represented the kings of Media and Persia and the goat represented the kings of Greece. The 2300-year period, then, began at the fall of the Persian Empire. Nineteenth-century biblical scholars claimed that the Persian Empire had ended in 457 BCE. By subtracting 457 from 2300, Miller decided that Jesus was going to return sometime in 1843.

[6] I discuss the meaning of the midnight cry in chapter 4, note 70.

[7] Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets*, 24-30, 113-117; David T. Arthur, "Millerism," Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1974), 161-171.

Though there was some debate about the precise date of the Advent, one Millerite eventually concluded that October 22, 1844 was the last possible day that Christ could come within the bounds of their 2300-year prediction based on Daniel 8.[8] On the long anticipated day, some Millerites walked through the streets, confident that Christ would return, or met together to worship and pray. Many others stayed at home with their loved ones or joined together at their usual meeting places to wait. When Christ did not appear, people looked to the leadership of the movement for answers—expecting another emendation of the timetable.

Miller and other leaders, however, did not provide another explanation. Instead, they began to issue apologies for their incorrect teaching. Responses to this "Great Disappointment" varied. Many people simply abandoned Millerism altogether. Miller's right-hand man, J.V. Himes, wanted to maintain their faith in the movement, but to stop predicting specific dates for Christ's return. Others concluded that Christ had returned to earth on October 22, but that he had come spiritually. They believed that the Second Coming had been an internal event.[9]

The Sabbatarian Adventists, the group that would become the Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, decided that an important spiritual work had occurred in heaven on October 22. They argued that Millerites had misunderstood the meaning of the cleansing of the sanctuary that was prophesied in Daniel 8. Rather than predicting Jesus'

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[8] This number was chosen based on a Jewish liturgical calendar that used a lunar calendar rather than a solar calendar. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets*, 135

[9] Ibid 141. Miller retained his faith that Christ would return soon, and he blamed historians' inaccurate dates for his miscalculations.

return to earth, Daniel had actually foreseen that Jesus would enter a new part of the heavenly sanctuary—the holiest of holies—and begin to cleanse it in final preparation for his return.[10] White's first vision confirmed this interpretation of the events and encouraged faithfulness to Miller's cause. With this vision she commenced down the path of visionary leadership.

Even though White would eventually become the recognized prophet for the Sabbatarian Adventists, her visions and prophecies did not receive immediate acceptance from everyone, even among the core of leadership of the Adventist movement. Although some of them claimed that her visions were diabolical in origin, most simply questioned whether the existence of a visionary was biblically defensible. Others, however, accepted her visions as genuine on an intellectual level, but resisted obeying them on a personal level.

Thus, to attain legitimacy as a visionary leader, White, along with her advocates within the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, undertook a campaign to justify her visions. To that end she sought to make herself indispensable by demonstrating that her visions provided divine sanction for the new doctrines that Adventists wanted to make their new orthodoxy. Given that they still believed that Jesus would return at a quickly approaching but unknown, the outcome of these conversations about doctrine held eternal significance: they had to get it right, or they could potentially miss their opportunity for salvation. At the same time, while James White and her other supporters offered biblical justification for the existence of her visions beyond the limited age of miracles, she

[10] Ibid 146, 152; Judd, 33ff.

exerted her power by employing her visions as a disciplinary tool. For White, ethics and community building went hand in hand as her internal critics one by one admitted that her visions had correctly identified their sins. In the end, she solidified her ethical influence on her community when she persuaded Adventist leadership to open the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan thereby linking the message of Christ with the message of right living through health. In these ways, she created a "visionary ethics"—an ethos in which in a divinely inspired leader makes the rules for the community.

THEOLOGICAL VISIONS

White's early visions played an important role in helping Sabbatarian Adventists decide which new theological ideas would be central to their developing communal identity. Her visions, for instance, affirmed the idea that the Great Disappointment had not been a disappointment at all, but had marked heavenly changes. She also confirmed their belief in the existence of a heavenly sanctuary, and she helped Adventists come to recognize and practice the Saturday Sabbath. While her role in establishing doctrine convinced some that her visions were valuable, White's leadership during the early years of the movement remained tenuous, as her visions served primarily to advance others' ideas, not her own. Nevertheless, in arguing for their trustworthiness and their significance to Adventist theology, she began to carve out a leadership position for herself.

White's first vision marked her as someone who could help settle the theological questions plaguing former Millerites. In particular, she verified their belief that the Great

Disappointment had a different meaning. This vision came to her while she was praying with a group of disappointed Millerite women in late 1844. In this vision, she saw "the advent people" walking along a lighted path. She understood that this light was "the midnight cry." As they followed Jesus along this path to the city at the far end, some wanted to give up, because they thought they would have reached the city sooner. She saw, however, that they would arrive at the city and receive salvation as long as they continued to follow Christ.[11]

White's vision legitimized the powerful experiences that Adventists had prior to 1844, by suggesting that they were right to heed the midnight cry, and only slightly wrong about what had occurred. Millerite Adventists had believed that his prophecies served as a warning, or "midnight cry", based on the parable of the ten virgins. In this parable, as the bridegroom returned to his home, a cry went out at midnight announcing his arrival.[12] Millerites had thought that the prophecies about 1843 served as a warning that Christ would come immediately, which turned out to be false. White's vision, however, confirmed that the "midnight cry" was still lighting the path of the Adventists who expected Christ's return. This meant that even though the cry had gone out, there would still be more time before the bridegroom, Christ, returned.[13]

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[11] White, *Life Sketches*, 63-64.

[12] For more about this parable see chapter 4, note 70.

[13] Ronald Graybill argues that White's first vision "'fit' the needs of the confused, struggling Millerite community in Maine," because it showed them that God had been with them all along. The midnight cry had meaning—just not what they had thought. It allowed people to believe they had been following God the whole time. Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century," (PhD Dissertation: The Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 101-102.

White's influence in the adoption of this interpretation of the midnight cry can be seen in the early Sabbatarian Adventist periodical, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (R&H). In 1851, James White wrote an article in which he explained that only part of the parable of the ten virgins had already been fulfilled. He pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem (predicted in Matthew chapter 24) and signs prophesied in the heavens as evidence that some of Jesus' prophesies had already come true. He argued that the prophecies about 1844 had served as the Midnight Cry, warning that Christ would be coming soon: the cry had gone out, but the bridegroom had not yet arrived. Azmond Woodruff wrote a letter to the editors of R&H in which he claimed, "That the parable of the ten virgins is fulfilled, down to the shut door at least, I cannot doubt." This meant that he agreed with the idea that the midnight cry had already occurred as well. Finally, her vision was published in a special edition of R&H that was delivered to believing Sabbatarian Adventists. White's vision had, at least obliquely, served to clarify the Great Disappointment.[14]

White used her vision of the heavenly sanctuary to make a stronger claim that her visions had authority in doctrinal matters. She was probably not the first person to suggest that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 was a heavenly sanctuary and that Jesus had entered the Holiest of Holies.[15] In the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, Hiram

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[14] Ellen G. White, "Experience and Views," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. II, no. 1, extra (Paris, Maine, 1851); James White, "The Parable," James White et all, eds., *Ibid*, Vol. I, No. 13 (Paris, ME 1851), 97-102. Azmond Woodruff, "Letter," *Ibid*, Vol. I, no. 7, (Paris, ME, 1851), 56.

[15] White's vision affirmed the idea that the "cleansing of sanctuary" in Daniel 8:14 referred to a heavenly rather than an earthly sanctuary. At the time, Adventists believed that there was a literal sanctuary in heaven that was an exact replica of the sanctuary created by the Israelites. This sanctuary had an outer courtyard that was separated from the Holy Place, which was where priests performed some sacrifices.

Edson and O.R.L. Crozier, two Millerites who became Sabbatarian Adventists, identified a passage in Revelation, which said, "…the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." This suggested to them that a change had actually occurred in the heavenly temple.[16]

Nevertheless, White positioned her visions as having the final decision about the doctrine taught by Crozier and Edson. In 1847, she wrote a letter to Eli Curtis, the editor of *Day-Dawn*, an Adventist periodical. She explained to Curtis that she had seen in a vision that "Jesus rose up, and shut the door, and entered the Holy of Holies, at the 7th month, 1844." She affirmed her belief that "the Sanctuary, to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days, is the New Jerusalem temple, of which Christ is a minister." She referred Curtis to Crozier's writing on the subject, saying, "The Lord shew me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of Sanctuary…" By saying that she had had this vision over a year ago, White was trying to claim precedence in positing the interpretation of the sanctuary—her vision had occurred around the same time that Crozier published his views. Furthermore, her vision gave the last word on the subject: "it was [God's] will, that Brother C. should write out the view

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Within it was a separate space, the Most Holy Place, or Holiest of Holies. Israelites were not allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, not even priests. Once per year the High Priest could enter it after a series of ceremonial cleansing processes and sacrifices. This cleansing of the sanctuary was intended to atone for the sins of the community for an entire year. White's vision definitively showed Jesus in this heavenly sanctuary. Leviticus 16

[16] Godfrey T. Anderson, "Sectarianism and Organization, 1846-1864," in Gary Land, ed., *Adventism in America: A History* (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1986), 39.

which he gave us in the Day-Star, Extra, February 7, 1846. I feel authorized by the Lord, to recommend that Extra, to every Saint."[17]

White's assertion of her right to provide holy sanction did not necessarily mean that everyone in the Sabbatarian Adventist community accepted her visions right away, so she argued that she never suffered from outside influence. In July 1847, She wrote to Joseph Bates to clarify when and how she received her vision about the bridegroom entering the holiest of holies. She told him the story of how she had first received "the view about the Bridegroom's coming…about the middle of February, 1845."[18] She recalled, "While in Exeter, Maine in meeting… many of them did not believe in" the new teachings about the shut door.[19] While she spoke, she "fell from [her] chair to the floor" in agony of soul. "It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from his mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom." According to White this idea was new to everyone in the room. She underscored to Bates: "Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected him to this earth to deliver His

[17] Ellen G. White to Brother Eli Curtis, April 21, 1847, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, C-002-1847. Crozier's article was published on February 7, 1846, as White suggested in her letter. O.R.L. Crozier, "The Law of Moses," E. Jacobs, ed., *The Day-Star*, Vol. 9, extra (Cincinnati, Ohio: D. Truesdale, Printer, February 7, 1846), 37-44.

[18] "The coming of the Bridegroom" refers to the Adventist interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:13. See footnote chapter 4, note 70.

[19] The "shut door" was a theological concept that circulated only during the first five to seven years after the Great Disappointment. Adventists still expected Jesus to return very soon, so they thought that the door to salvation had been shut to anyone who had not accepted their teachings prior to 1844. They later recanted when they realized that people outside of Millerite circles were eager to accept their teachings. This change was somewhat controversial in light of White's claims to divine inspiration about the shut door—which she later disavowed. As this was not a significant stumbling block to White's authority for many Adventists later on, I do not address it at length. Anderson 40.

people on the tenth day of the seventh month." She reiterated, "I did not hear a lecture or word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest."[20]

Finally, White's role in solidifying the practice of worship on Saturday helped her to gain notoriety as a visionary leader. In this case, White acknowledged hearing Joseph Bates' teachings about the Sabbath prior to receiving a vision about it. Initially, she "did not feel its importance, and thought that he erred in dwelling upon the fourth commandment more than upon the other nine."[21] That night, however, she saw a vision of angels gazing reverently at the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark, were the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments. She "was amazed as [she] saw the fourth commandment in the very center of the ten precepts, with a soft halo of light encircling it." She understood that "if the true Sabbath had been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist." She became convinced that changing the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week was the root of many other sins and problems in the world. If Adventists would spread the message, "many would embrace the Sabbath of the Lord."[22]

Sabbatarian Adventists recognized the importance of White's vision of Sabbath enough to publish it in R&H.[23] They also wrote to each other about the importance of the

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[20] Ellen G. White to Brother Bates, July 13, 1847, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-003-1847.

[21] White, *Life Sketches*, 95

[22] Ibid 96. White had additional visions of the Sabbath. See Ibid 100-101; Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Hastings, April 21, 1849, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-005-1849, and Ellen G. White to Sister Harriet, August 11, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-003-1851.

[23] Ellen G. White, "To the Remnant Scattered Abroad," James White et al, eds, *The Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 2, no. 1 extra (Saratoga Springs, NY: July 21, 1851), 2-3. Of course, James White was the

Sabbath. Mary Nichols, for instance, rejoiced with Sister Collins that a relative of hers—perhaps her husband—had "come out so clear and strong in the Sabbath."[24] Joseph Bates informed the Hastings that he thought, "The saints will be sealed under this covenant & sign. The Holy Sabbath." If they did not unite under this practice, they would lose the opportunity for salvation: "I conceive that our work for the saving, securing or sealing the little flock is now closing up forever because we cannot offer the united prayed to God… in at least one point of our faith."[25]

Not only were Adventists keeping the Sabbath on Saturday, but White's significance to this practice had spread beyond their faith community. Jane Clow, a young woman who was not an Adventist, wrote to her aunt and uncle about "some in our neighborhood that keep the seventh day for the Sabbath and do their work on the first such as washing ploughing and the like." She recognized that most of them had been "millerites" but "now they have a woman among them that has visions her name is ellen white she tells great things that she sees…"[26] White had acquired a reputation as a visionary leader by the early 1850s.

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editor of R&H, making it a natural output for White's visions. Scholars have written about the dynamic team that James and Ellen White made during the first two decades of their marriage. James defended the legitimacy of his wife's visions, while she had visions defending his role in the church and rebuking people who hurt him. See, for instance, Graybill 1-25. While Graybill is certainly accurate in his description of the mutual support the Whites provided for each other, I nevertheless use R&H as a gauge of the beliefs that Seventh-day Adventists were teaching, because it was the primary vehicle by which the group remained connected in the years leading up to the official founding of the church in 1863.

[24] Mary Nichols to Sister Collins, December 12, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

[25] Joseph Bates to Brother and Sister Hastings, August 7, 1848, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

[26] Clow added at the end of her description of White's visions that she did "not believe her." Jane Clow to Henry and Margaret Harris, June 27, 1853, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

In the early years of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, White's visions were more adopted and implemented by her community through an identifiable process. She would have a vision in a public or private setting, which she and others would write about in letters. Once R&H was operating, publishing her visions—either directly, as in the case of the vision of the Sabbath, or indirectly, as in the case of the heavenly sanctuary—indicated that the community was beginning to accept them. People began to profess the truth of the visions by living them out, especially evident in the case of the seventh-day Sabbath. Nevertheless, publication in R&H did not signify total recognition of White as a visionary. Indeed, despite many ardent supporters, she faced an uphill battle that required people to overcome doubts about the possibility of visions and, then, about her visionary leadership qualifications in particular.

Reconciling Prophecy to the Modern Era

Despite some Protestants' openness to the possibility of direct communication with God and Millerites' appreciation of biblical prophecy, White still faced challenges from fellow Sabbatarian Adventists, who believed her claim to receive messages directly from God defied scripture. Thus, she and her supporters endeavored to convince them to respect her visions by demonstrating that they were biblically sanctioned. Through a series of articles in R&H, they argued that a healthy church required prophecy, and that prophecy was integral to the theology of the end of days. Their theological defenses helped to ease broader acceptance of White's visionary leadership, but were not sufficient on their own to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, most of White's supporters' early arguments of visions only obliquely endorsed her specifically, instead defending prophecy in general terms. They were initially reticent to publicize her prophecies to a wider audience during the early years of the journal's publication. In fact, they made no mention of her or her prophecies in the articles they published defending the continuation of spiritual gifts, and they only mentioned White's prophecies for the first time in a special extra edition of R&H. In this supplemental publication, she presented an abbreviated version of some material that formed the basis for her autobiographical works. At the end of the paper, the editors explained why they had published a separate issue to convey her personal story and visions. They clarified that this extra issue was not intended "for so general circulation as the regular paper," because "that strong prejudice exist[ed] in many minds against a portion of its contents." They knew that some people would object to her visionary claims, but they believed that God would "teach his tried people at this most important period in the history of God's people in the same manner as in past time."[27]

White's supporters argued that the Bible demonstrated that the gift of prophecy was ever intended to cease and was important to the spiritual health of the church. They relied upon several key passages in the New Testament about "spiritual gifts" to make their case. They looked, for instance, to Ephesians 4:11-12, in which Paul explained that Christ had given different gifts to various members of the church: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

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[27] Joseph Bates et al, eds, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 2, no. 1. extra (Paris, Maine, 1851), 4.

Additionally, they cited 1 Corinthians 12 in which Paul again presented the importance of a diversity of spiritual gifts for the strength of the church: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

Ever in favor of his wife's gifts, James White observed that many of those gifts, like teaching and preaching, were still practiced in Protestant churches, but these same people argued that prophecy and speaking in tongues were limited only to the apostles. They argued that it did not make sense to decide arbitrarily that only some gifts were intended to survive the Apostolic age: "…we have no scripture evidence that they were designed for a limited portion of the gospel age…" They asked, "If a portion of the gifts were to remain in the church, why not all of them remain?" Rather, they thought that the gifts were "designed to exist in the church as long as the saints in their mortal state needed the teaching of the Bible and the Holy Spirit."[28]

White's advocates contended that prophecy only appeared absent from the church because of internal failure. These "gifts of the spirit" had disappeared for a variety of reasons. For instance, the church often had often been ashamed of spiritual gifts: "Whenever the church has become Worldly, proud, destitute of the Spirit, and blind, they… have looked upon the operations of the Holy Spirit with suspicion." It was this suspicion and lack of faith that caused them to call "the gracious work of the Spirit in the Midnight Cry in 1844, mesmerism and fanaticism." In other words, some Christians

[28] James White et al, eds, "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. I, No. 9 (Paris, Maine, 1851), 69. See also, "Gifts of the Gospel Church", *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (Rochester, NY, 1853), 13ff. As far as I can tell the article in Volume IV, number 2 is identical to the one in Volume I, number 9.

wanted to appear rational to others around them, which caused them to ignore genuine spiritual guidance from the Holy Spirit. Additionally, they noted that people who had received spiritual gifts often did not know what to do with them. They either did not understand what they had, or they became very proud and abused their gifts, making them useless to the church: "We think it is a fact that many of the greatest fanatics in the land, have once shared largely in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but by not having good instruction, they have fallen through pride."[29] They observed that this made the gifts difficult to handle—even the apostle Paul was given a "thorn in his flesh" to keep him humble in the face of the many spiritual gifts that God had give him.[30]

Nevertheless, they contended that spiritual gifts were essential to the health of the church, because people did not follow the Bible perfectly. Visions and prophecies should be employed, as long as they were used properly with deference to scripture. Indeed, they argued that the Bible should have been a sufficient guide for the church, "If every member of the church of Christ was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, and searched the Holy Scriptures diligently and with much prayer for duty." Unfortunately, most people did not do this, so spiritual gifts were necessary to keep the people of God on the right track.

White's supporters cautioned, however, that believers should not look to spiritual gifts like dreams and prophecies to learn their "duty" to God, because he would only use spiritual gifts in extreme cases. They thought he would employ them when "a portion of

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[29] "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," 69.
[30] 2 Corinthians 12: 6-8

the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak and sickly…" Then and only then might it seem "necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal the erring."[31] The gifts of the Holy Spirit were from God, but they were intended for special use only—when the church or individuals needed correction. Unlike Elias Hicks, who believed that communal revelation should form a part of regular worship, they thought that visions were not a sign of God's pleasure, but an indication that they had gone astray. Nevertheless, prophecies would keep the church healthy by disciplining their sins—a strategy White later implemented regularly.

White's supporters also argued in favor of spiritual gifts, because they signified that Christ would soon return. They especially referred to Acts 2 in which tongues of fire appeared on the heads of Jesus' disciples on the day of Pentecost. The author of Acts noted that those events seemed to fulfill a prophecy in the book of Joel, who had written that "in the last days" God promised to "pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." As a sign of these final days, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams..."[32] The gifts certainly could not have been limited to the time of the apostles, Adventists argued, because they were supposed to be present during the end of days.

Additionally, with the rise in prophecies and dreams that seemed to be happening all around them, they claimed that the end of days was near. Throughout several issues of R&H, they cited at length a pamphlet written by Henry Jones in 1843—the year prior to

[31] "The Gifts of the Gospel Church," 70
[32] See Acts 2:16-18; Joel 2:28-29

the Great Disappointment—called "Modern Phenomena of the Heavens." In this article, he contended that a number of phenomena that had occurred in the past half century, indicated that "those prophecies of Christ's return, and the signs of it, [were not] all mystical" and were still being fulfilled. He first pointed to evidence of "great signs in the heavens, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." He claimed that "the Aurora Borealis has perfectly and literally fulfilled these predictions, with special regard to the "Wonders," "fearful sights, and great signs" in the heavens, of "blood," "fire," and "pillars of smoke."[33] He acknowledged that some thought the aurora borealis was a naturally recurring phenomenon, but they had no proof, particularly because the Bible made no mention of such a natural event. He claimed that all known evidence suggested that it was a "modern" phenomenon, dating back only to the eighteenth century—ensuring Christ's return was increasingly imminent. When all of these signs—astronomical and spiritual—occurred at the same time, the saints could be even more assured that the end of days had truly come.[34]

By citing Jones at length, the editors at R&H, who supported White, made it clear that that shared his views, and though they did not mention her by name, they implied

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[33] Henry Jones, "Modern Phenomena of the Heavens," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. III, no. 12 (Rochester, New York, 1852), 94. To prove his point he provided "a description of the phenomenon, as it was witnessed in London, Sept. 3, 1839." An article from the *New York Commercial Adviser* highlighted a number of apparently telling phenomena associated with the aurora borealis, including falling stars, a "crimson" light, volumes of smoke, and "a continual succession of meteors." Witnesses called it "alarming," saying it appeared like "a terrific fire." "From Late London Papers", *New York Commercial Advisor* (October 22, 1839) in Ibid 94.

[34] Jones' article continued in a similar vein. He related several reports that in New England on May 19, 1780, the sun had risen normally, but by ten A.M. it had become so dark that people could not see outside. He also argued that there had been even more recent signs in the stars—namely a shower of falling stars on November 13, 1833. As with the aurora borealis, he argued that these phenomena did not have a credible natural or scientific explanation. See Jones, "Modern Phenomena of the Heavens," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. III, no. 13 (Rochester, New York, 1852).

that White's existence as a visionary meant that they did not have to abandon their millennial hopes. They were certain that God would "fulfill his word and give visions in the last days" as he had always done for his followers throughout history. Nevertheless, they chose to publish her visions separately "for the benefit" of people who definitely believed in them. They were especially aware that her visions were unlikely to be accepted by newcomers to the faith without some explanation. Thus, articles like "The Gifts of the Gospel Church" and "Modern Phenomena of the Heavens" implicitly laid the groundwork for garnering faith in her gift of prophecy. To gain full recognition, White would have to take matters into her own hands.

COMBATING SIN AND CAMPAIGNING FOR VISIONS

The campaign for White's prophetic calling among Sabbatarian Adventists proceeded not only through official publications, but also through personal contact between the prophet and church members. Although there were always people who accepted her visions immediately, she frequently labored intensely to convince people of the truth of her visions. In the testimonies of her visions, she possessed an almost unbelievable ability to discern individuals' hidden faults and problems. Through firsthand encounters and aptly timed letters, she often persuaded people to follower her by revealing these secret shortcomings. For White, community development depended on a visionary ethics in which her followers heeded her call to overcome sin. This campaign was largely successful among lay members of the church. Yet while some Adventist leaders actively affirmed her role as visionary disciplinarian, others to resist the visions. She would have to employ visionary discipline to secure her leadership position.

In telling the stories of her early visionary career, White implied that people were convinced of her visions because she knew things about them that she could not have known otherwise. Much like Hicks' contemporary Priscilla Hunt, White demonstrated an uncanny ability to root out hidden sins. Prior to her visit to Camden, New York in 1850, in a vision she "saw a woman who professed much piety, but who was a hypocrite, and was deceiving the people of God." When she arrived, she saw the woman, and felt saddened by her presence there. During the night she dreamt of cleaning out a closet filled with rubbish, and she realized that it was her responsibility to clean out the garbage of sin there. At Sunday worship, she was "taken off in vision, and again shown the case of this woman." She sensed that the woman was not right with God, because "Jesus frowned upon the woman and her husband." She told the woman what she had seen, and the woman denied it. The congregation did not know how to react.

The woman, however, soon became afraid and went door to door, confessing her sins. She admitted that "the man she had been living with for years was not her husband." In fact, she had run away from England, leaving behind "a kind husband and one child." She confessed to other "wicked acts," and "her repentance seemed to be genuine." These events made the people believe in White's visions, and they "were fully established in the belief that God had revealed to [her] the things which [she] had spoken…to save them from deception and dangerous error."[35]

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[35] White, *Life Sketches*, 129-130. Indeed White apparently convinced Joseph Bates to trust her by demonstrating knowledge of things she could not have known about. He believed in her only after she had a vision in which she "for the first time had a view of other planets." When Bates learned that she had never studied astronomy, he became persuaded that her visions were genuine. Ibid 95-98. His conversion to White's visions seems to have been genuine, as he wrote to the Hastings in 1848 that she had seen in a

White's letters reveal that firsthand experience with her visions was often essential to persuade people of her prophetic power. For instance, in 1849 she reported a vision in which she, saw that Brother Stowell was not convinced of the shut door, so she and James visited the Stowells to provide spiritual strengthening. She had two visions while in their presence, and, according to her, the Stowells believed in the doctrine of the shut door and of the validity of her visions after witnessing them.[36]

White also claimed that personal encounters with her enabled people to overcome doctrinal errors. Brother Hewit observed White's visions in person, and he apparently no longer suspected that she was an imposter. She described this scene in a letter to the church meeting at the Hastings' house in 1850. According to her, Brother Hewit challenged several Sabbatarian doctrines, and he claimed that "a woman Jezebel, a prophetess had brought in [these teachings]… that I was that woman, Jezebel." He thought that she was responsible for spreading false doctrines with her prophecies. The group there "told him of his errors in the past," but "It had… little effect." Instead Hewit's "darkness was felt upon the meeting and it dragged."

White recalled being inspired to "say a few words," and shortly thereafter she felt "the meeting change." She reported, "Every one felt it at the same instant. Every

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vision that "that she must go West before she returned to [Maine] and says she saw that I was needed there." He affirmed, "This move West I understand to be the work of God." Joseph Bates to Brother and Sister Hastings, August 7, 1848, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

[36] Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Hastings, April 21, 1849, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-005-1849. I discuss the doctrine of the shut door above in note 19. James reported the same incident regarding Brother Stowell in a letter to the Hastings as well. See James S. White to Brother and Sister Hastings, March 22, 1849, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001

countenance was lighted up. The presence of God filled the place." In response, "Brother Hewit dropped upon his knees and began to cry and pray." White was soon "taken off in vision" that she did not describe in this letter. She claimed that the vision "had a great effect upon bro Hewit," who concluded that "it was of God and was humbled in the dust." Afterward, he began to write, "renouncing all his errors that he has advanced."[37] Once more, personal experience of her visions had reportedly convinced someone that they were genuine.

White endeavored to correct a whole range of behaviors and interpersonal dynamics by sharing her heavenly insights. Sometimes she addressed these sins, such as pride, arrogance, or discord, in letters instead of in person—claiming that her visions had given her insights from far away. In June 1852, she wrote to the church in Jackson, Michigan about a number of issues in their congregation. She recounted a vision in which she saw that Brother Bowles "had got out of his place and thought he had a great work to do when he had not." He had a prideful attitude and had taken on leadership that God did not want him to. She also accused the congregation of fostering a negative attitude about a man in their group. Instead of taking their grievances to this man, as the Bible commanded, they were spreading this attitude through gossip and had caused "a breach… in the band that was previously united."[38] They were guilty of pride, gossip, and hatred—all of which White had apparently learned of directly from God.

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[37] Ellen G. White to the Church in Brother Hastings' House, November 27, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-028-1850

[38] Ellen G. White to the Brethren and Sisters in Jackson, June 2, 1852, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-002-1852

White addressed other kinds of interpersonal issues in her visions as well, such as greed or impropriety with the opposite sex, and she always professed to know about others' problems from her visions. In 1854 she wrote to Brother Pearsall to chastise him for inappropriate behavior toward the women in their fellowship. She claimed that she had seen that he "had not abstained from all appearance of evil [and] had been too familiar with the sisters." She explained further that it was inappropriate for him "to sit another woman upon his knee, or allow it in a woman, but his own wife."[39] In 1857 she challenged Brother Rumery for his selfishness and greed. She had seen that he "could in many little acts have eased Brother Jones' [financial] burden, and never felt it." Rumery, however, had "loved money better than religion, better than God, and it [was] like taking out the right eye, cutting off the right arm, to part with this money." She warned him that God was displeased with him and would not recognize him on judgment day if he were unwilling to sacrifice for his spiritual brothers and sisters.[40]

As White wrote these visionary letters, she contended that there was a necessary connection between obeying the visions and remaining faithful. In 1853, she warned the church in Jackson not to act like the church in Connecticut, which was "in a sad state." While some responded to "their wrongs [that] were shown in vision… others rose up in rebellion, and said they did not believe the vision." The result of this was that "their children were in a sad state but were much affected by the visions and would have got

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[39] Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Pearsall, July 12, 1854, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, P-003-1854

[40] Ellen G. White to Brother Rumery, October 8, 1857, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, R-009-1857

right, but their parents stood in their way." Their children supposedly had been open to change their lives based on the visions, but their parents' unwillingness inhibited them. The Spirit left the parents, who received "judgment after judgment," until they repented of their unbelief. After that, however, their children could never be reached with the truth, and some had fallen so deep into sin that they had been rejected from their families. She warned the people in Jackson that "those who rejected the light from Heaven and the means God had taken to set them right, he would leave to themselves…" They needed to repent of their sins and follow the visions, or their children would be lost.[41]

White argued further that the visions were not just essential to staying on the right course; they distinguished the true believers from false. In a letter to the church in Mansville, New York in 1856, she emphasized, as she had in the past, that the visions could "come from but two sources"—God or Satan. She argued that genuine visions could be identified by "their fruits." She asked them, "Look at the lives of those who have opposed the visions. How long do they hold fast to the truth?" The implication was that lack of belief in the visions would lead to loss of faith: "Just as soon as you begin to crush or smother the gifts of the church or to slight them, just so soon the blessing of God leaves that church." Harkening to the theological arguments in R&H, she explained that their movement was set apart because they bore "a decided testimony in favor of the gifts

[41] Ellen G. White to the Church in Jackson, June 29, 1853, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-003-1853

God has placed in church…" In fact, " The nominal churches [were] in darkness and corrupt," because "They [had] shut out the gifts God has placed in the church…."[42]

White even presented others' testimony to make a case for the strong connection between Adventist belief and her visions. By 1851, the Whites had abandoned their belief in the shut door, but Brother Baker of Vermont still thought that only people who had believed in the Advent in 1844 would be saved. At a meeting in Waterbury, she shared that she had seen that "Brother Baker his going to the churches to proclaim the third angel's message was all wrong" and sinful because of his lack of unity with "…the messengers of God." Afterward, she had apparently convinced him, and he responded by affirming the necessary connection between the visions and the message of the Sabbatarian Adventism: "…It is high time for me to decide there is not half way work about this business; the visions are all of God or there is none of them of God…." He ultimately decided to "Believe the visions, " because he saw "that they were inseparably connected with the third angel's message, and if I give up the visions I must give up the third angel's message..." and his faith in the Bible and in Christ. He reportedly realized that his entire faith in Christianity rested on a set of interlocking beliefs that depended on her visions.[43]

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[42] Ellen G. White to Friends in Mansville & Vicinity, circa 1856, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, B-020-1860. White's arguments in this letter echoed those in favor of spiritual gifts in R&H.

[43] Ellen White to Brother and Sister Howland, November 12, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-008-1851. Indeed some people were even excluded from fellowship after insisting that they did not believe in the visions. In the same letter about Brother Baker, White described a congregation that had been led astray by Stephen Smith. After she had a vision among them, the brethren voted unanimously to bar fellowship from him until he "lay down his erroneous views." They had become "convinced that the visions were of God" because of White's

Despite these successes on an individual level, skepticism of White's abilities remained prevalent, and by 1855, the Sabbatarian Adventist movement was seemingly in crisis. The number of visions she was receiving had slowed to a trickle, and she wondered whether her work as a prophet had come to an end.[44] The leadership of the movement also had observed a diminishment in the overall spiritual power of their worship meetings. As they looked for solutions to the problem, they concluded that they needed to pay closer attention to White's visions and actively to require the members of their churches to believe in them.

Those Adventist leaders who supported White appealed to the visions' role as an ethical guide to argue for their, and by extension her, importance. At a conference at Battle Creek, Michigan in 1855, M.E. Cornell, J.H. Waggoner, and Joseph Bates pointed determined that lack of faith in White's visions was sinful. They felt the need to "confess our unfaithfulness and departure from the way of the Lord" and "the decline of faith and spirituality amongst the scattered flock." They admitted, "We, as people have not…appreciated the glorious privilege of claiming the gifts which our blessed Master has vouchsafed to his people." In particular they had neglected the ability of Jesus "to forgive our sins and to heal our sicknesses," and they had ignored "the visions…

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knowledge of their sins and because of their firsthand experience of the visions. Smith's adamant denial of the visions served as justification to deny his membership in the church. It seems that his primary offense was belief in spiritualism—something that White and other Adventist leaders thought was the work of the devil. Smith and his family, however, eventually repented of their belief in spiritualism and were admitted back to the group. For an account of this see James White et all, eds., "Bro. Stephen Smith," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. III, No. 14 (Rochester, NY, 1852), 112.

[44] Graybill 103-104

promised to the remnant 'in the last days.'"[45] They argued that the gifts had to be the solution, because, in their experience, they tended "to unite the hears of the saints, to lead to meekness and humility and holy living, and incite[d] to deep heart-searching before God, and a confession of wrongs." In making this claim, they reaffirmed their belief in the visions and publicly acknowledged White as their prophet. They also followed her in arguing that her visions were good because of their ethical fruits.

Though they promised to be tolerant of people who had not yet been persuaded of the truth of the visions, they emphasized that belief in the visions was increasingly becoming a central part of their identity as Sabbatarian Adventists. They said that it would be inconsistent to claim to believe that the visions came "from the divine Mind" but to refuse "to abide by their teachings, and be corrected by their admonitions." Thus, it seemed the only thing for them to do was to decide whether they were "willing to bear the reproach of the position we have taken" and to live according to God's will as revealed to them. Sabbatarian Adventists now had to listen to White's visions to remain in the fellowship.[46]

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[45] Joseph Bates, J.H. Waggoner, and M.E. Cornell, "Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855," Uriah Smith et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 7, no 10. (Battle Creek, MI: December 4, 1855), 78-79. By this point, the operations of *Review and Herald* had been moved from Rochester, New York to Battle Creek, effectively relocating the church headquarters there as well. White had been advised in a vision to relocate there, because it would put the church in closer proximity to the expanding American west, which she believed needed to be the focus of church missionary activity.
[46] White also began to have visions again. Ibid 78-79. Graybill argues that there was a direct connection between the quantity of White's visions and her followers' belief in the visions. He attributes the slowing of her visions during the early 1850s to the fact that church leadership was not seeking her counsel and people generally were not interested in her visions as much. He argues that White's prophetic leadership, thus, affirms Max Weber's claim that religious virtuous depend on the belief of their believers for their legitimacy: "To [White], these circumstances showed that God would not continue to bestow a gift that was not appreciated and used. To Max Weber, they would prove that 'it is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma.'" Graybill 103

After this public reaffirmation of White's abilities, people throughout the Sabbatarian Adventist community grappled with the question of the visions even more seriously than in the early 1850s. Some defended the visions during the late 1850s and early 1860s by appealing to the theological defenses of the early 1850s.[47] Others responded to the 1855 "Address" by saying that doubters should not be tolerated. Hiram Bingham, for instance, wrote that James White had "placed a less estimate upon [the visions] than the churches here have, and it has thus brought in some lack of confidence and trials in many minds." A few years later, D.T. Bourdreau communicated his consternation that the gifts were not more ardently defended. He also argued that there was a necessary connection between "the testimony of Jesus" and "the spirit of prophecy," so people who did not "believe in the gifts of the Spirit" did not "fully comprehend the last message of mercy." Though he thought that people should be given time to study the gifts, he still argued that they should not back down in using belief in them as a "standard:" "If we fully believe the Bible we shall believe in the gifts; for the Bible establishes the perpetuity of the gifts." Thus, some believed firmly in the visions

[47] See for example, David Arnold, "Visions and Dreams. Their origin, nature, and utility," Uriah Smith et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 7, no 22. (Battle Creek, MI: February 28, 1856), 170-171. James White also continued to argue for biblical endorsement of the gifts. He maintained that visions were only intended to step in "if then individuals err from Bible truth, or through strife urge erroneous views upon the honest seekers for truth, then is God's opportunity to correct them by the gifts." James White, "The Gifts—Their Object," Uriah Smith et al, eds., Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol. 7, no 22. (Battle Creek, MI: February 28, 1856), 172. White also claimed that his view on the relationship between visions and scripture was "in harmony with our entire experience on this subject." One wonders whether he was being slightly disingenuous here, because he had personally responded to plenty of visions from his wife that were not related directly to theological matters. It is also possible that he separated these visions from those intended for the whole church.

and were concerned that other churches were not following the visions as though they were a rule for the church.[48]

Other Advocates for White's visions took to the road to convince Sabbatarian Adventists of their importance. Adventist minister M.E. Cornell, for instance, toured New York in 1862. He reported success, claiming that "more than three-fourths of all [he] saw on this tour, heartily acknowledge the gifts." He rejoiced that "several who had been undecided in regard to the gifts in the church, took a stand for them." He believed that people most people who did not like the visions objected to them because they had rebuked them. He argued, however, "If the visions did not reprove our wrongs we should then have reason to doubt them." Some who had been "reproved by the visions, saw no way to deny them but to say the gifts have been abolished." They were beginning a necessary connection to belief in the Bible: "If the Bible is true…then spiritual gifts are perpetuated."[49]

Evidence of Cornell's success can be seen in a letter from W.H. Ball to R&H in early 1862. W.H. Ball had written to the editors of R&H early that year to present his skepticism of White's abilities as a prophet. He claimed that he had found false teachings in *Experience and Views*. He accused her of supporting the Shut Door doctrine—a

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[48] Hiram Bingham to James White, Uriah Smith et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 7, no 20. (Battle Creek, MI: February 14, 1856), 158; D.T. Bourdreau to R&H, James White et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no. 21. (Battle Creek, MI: April 22, 1862), 163. James White responded to Bingham's letter in an ambiguous fashion, by pointing out that the visions were not "*the* rule of [their] faith." He also thought that it would be "fanaticism" "to say unqualifiedly that they are a test" and enforce them on people "who know nothing of their teachings, spirit and fruit", especially when there were so many imposters out there. Nevertheless, he thought that the visions were "the property of the church, and a test to those who believe them from Heaven." James White to Hiram Bingham, Uriah Smith et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 7, no 20. (Battle Creek, MI: February 14, 1856), 158.
[49] M.E. Cornell, "Meetings in New York," James White et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no 26. (Battle Creek, MI: May 27, 1862), 205. It is impossible to verify his claims.

teaching that Adventists had eventually rejected. He also objected to a vision in which Christians had wings—something that he thought defied the teachings of scripture. Finally, he concluded by presenting the argument of many Protestants who opposed continuing prophecy: if the gifts were intended to continue in the church, why did they stop?[50] After hearing Cornell speak, however, Ball concluded that he "dare not longer oppose" the visions for fear of "the peril of [his] soul." He admitted that "since it first became evident that the visions were to be made a test of fellowship," he had "been prejudiced against them, and ha[d] manifested a spirit of opposition to them…" He noticed, however, that the people who seemed to agree to his opposition were "the crooked, half-hearted, and scoffers…" This realization combined with Cornell's teaching convinced him. He suggested that doubters consider the following question: "It is a settled fact that the visions of sister White are from the Lord, or from the Devil. If from the latter, why does not the Lord bless any effort which may be made to prove them false?"[51]

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[50] W.H. Ball to the Editors, James White et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no 8. (Battle Creek, MI: January 21, 1862), 62-63. Uriah Smith composed a response to him answering the specific objections. He said that the passage in experience and views that seemed to indicate the shut door doctrine was really a prediction of the revivals of 1858-9. He also observed that angels have wings, so it is possible that man could have wings after the resurrection. Finally, he suggested that there was not an accurate historical record to suggest that there were never any signs or manifestations between 200 AD and the present. He concluded with a warning: "Having now answered your objections, one fact may be appropriately stated in closing: it is that those who decide against these manifestations, sooner or later take such a course as to place themselves beyond the utmost limits of the fellowship of this people." The message was clear—support the visions or (eventually) you will be disfellowshipped. For more on the revivals of 1858-9, see Kathryn Long, *The Revival of 1857-58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[51] W.H. Ball, "A Confession," James White et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no 23. (Battle Creek, MI: May 6, 1862), 179.

DISCIPLINING AND CONVINCING ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP

For many Sabbatarian Adventists the visions had become inextricably bound up with other theological commitments, and they assumed that only sinners would oppose them. Meanwhile, despite this growing acceptance of the visions, some church leaders remained skeptical. In many cases, White confronted these men and their wives with their personal sins as part of the process of persuasion. Thus, ethical and organizational formation went hand in hand, as they were forced to accept White's visions and to find a way to incorporate them into their conception of church governance. The case of J.N. Andrews in particular illustrates how fraught the relationship between minister and prophet could be, as well as how she succeeded in winning over her most sophisticated detractors within the church—again by disciplining their sins.

Despite John N. Andrews' involvement with church leadership, a conflict between the Whites and the Andrews families, Maine created a decade-long contest over the legitimacy of James' leadership and Ellen's visions.[52] The Whites had lived with Andrews' parents, Edward and Sarah, during a visit to Paris, Maine in 1850. Because of his frequent rebukes of the church, James acquired a reputation for abrasiveness. The Andrews and Stevens families became staunch critics of the Whites after this experience. Because Ellen's visions tended to endorse her husband, both families also doubted her

[52] John N. Andrews and his family had also joined the Millerites in 1843. He met the Whites in 1849, a few years after the Great Disappointment. During the earliest years of the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, he stood out as someone with a unique talent for grappling with complex issues of theology, so he joined the board of R&H at the age of twenty-two. Over the years R&H published a number of his articles, and his ideas comprised key doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the 1870s, Andrews became the first Adventist missionary to Europe.

inspiration.[53] Indeed in describing this trip in 1851, White wrote that God had told her not to return there, because "they had not heeded the visions." She warned her friend to stay away from the Stevens and Andrews families especially, because they were "much more devoted to themselves than they are to God." Even though they "appear[ed] to be spiritual and interesting… they [were] in a dark place."[54]

As she did with other doubters, White tried to rein in these negative attitudes by rebuking the church in Paris for its lack of faith. She warned them that they had "a knowledge of the truth and a form of godliness, but the power has been lacking." In her vision she "saw ... selfishness in your families." In particular, she "was shown that there was a link between Brn. Andrews and Stevens' family that would have to be broken," because they "were more zealous to please each other, than [they] were to please Jesus who died for [them]." Beyond that she "saw that there has not been true faith in the visions." If they had believed in the visions earlier, she argued, they "would not have

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[53] Graybill 14

[54] Ellen White to Harriet Hastings, August 11, 1851, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-003-1851. In addition to these personal tensions, there might have been competing visions circulating in Paris at the time that cast further doubt on White's unique inspiration. Edward Andrews recalled that "a fearful fanaticism spread among [them]." He had at first "thought the burthens and visions that were among the children and grown persons at Paris (Maine) were all from the Lord." By this he implied that others were receiving visions aside from White. Initially he "received them and drank in their fearful spirit," but he "soon was obliged to see that their fruits were bad…" Instead of turning "entirely from them" and heeding "the views of Sister White", he decided that he "would be guided by none [no visions]." Edward Andrews to James and Ellen White, January 25, 1863, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001. I have not been able to find other evidence about these competing visions, even in the letters written by the other members of the Andrews family.

been left to go into the error [they] did." This vision was convenient, perhaps, but White appeared sincere in believing that God would condemn those who doubted her.[55]

White again linked moral correction and visionary experience in trying to relate to Andrews and his family. In 1855, she wrote again to John Andrews to chastise him for his failure to ease tensions between her and his family. She reminded him of her previous admonishment that marriage would not help him spiritually, because he planned to marry someone who could not "take care of, and nurse" him—Angeline Stevens. Moreover, his preoccupation with marriage had distracted him from "the glory of God and the advancement of his cause." Despite these misgivings, White had a new vision in which she "saw that [he] could do no better now than to marry Angeline," because their relationship had gone so "far [that] it would be wronging Angeline to have it stop here." It had also been revealed to her that "the impression upon the minds of friends in Paris is now and has been, yourself not excepted, that we made too much of the trials there." Not only had the Andrews and Stevens families exaggerated the White's treatment of them in Paris, but they still clung to that impression. She maintained, however, "the things there have been shown in vision in their true light, and have not been exaggerated at all." The implication was that Andrews and his family needed to repent of their attitudes toward the Whites and the visions.[56]

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[55] Ellen G. White, "To Brother J.N. Andrews and Sister H.N. Smith," PH016, https://egwwritings.org/ (accessed September 8, 2012).

[56] She also reminded him of the wrongs he had done to a woman named Annie, when he had lived in Paris. He had come between them and Annie, because he believed that they had been too harsh toward the people there. He had encouraged Annie's point of view in every way, which showed a lack of trust in them. Ellen G. White to John N. Andrews, August 26, 1855, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of

White must have hoped that showing Andrews his personal sins would bring him and his family into the fold, but the 1855 letter did not resolve their conflict. In December 1856, she was inspired to travel to Waukon, Iowa, where the two families had relocated. There she "found nearly all the Sabbath keepers sorry we had come." She attributed this poor reception to the prejudice of "a disaffected party" that had settled there. Although White did not name them, it is clear that she meant the Stevens and Andrews families. During a worship service among them, White "was taken off in vision," which, she claimed, everyone "was constrained to acknowledge… was of God." In her vision God said to them, "Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and heal all thy backslidings." She recalled, "Confessions were made of their disunion of feelings with us, their wrong feelings, and their backslidden state."[57]

When people like the Andrews and Stevens, who were influential in the movement, did not support the visions, White saw this as a problem and endeavored to alleviate it through her usual tactic of rebuking sin. Even after these periodic admonishments, or perhaps because of them, the families continued to express doubts about the Whites. Things came to a head in the early 1860s, as the Sabbatarian Adventists were organizing themselves into an official church. White wrote to Harriet (Stevens)

Southwestern Adventist University, A-001-1855. White is probably referring to Uriah Smith's sister Annie, who died in 1855. Numbers 79

[57] Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II (Ellen G. White Estate, 2011), 217-222. She referred in this passage to "Sr. H.N.S." and "Br. J.N.A." H.N.S. probably refers to Angeline's sister Harriet Stevens (later Harriet Smith), and J.N.A. certainly refers to John Andrews. After this 1855 letter, she wrote again to Harriet (Stevens) Smith to chastise her for distracting her husband Uriah from his work at R&H and for fomenting discord between Uriah and James. Ellen G. White to Harriet Smith, January 21, 1856, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, S-008-1856; Ellen G. White to Uriah and Harriet Smith, October 8, 1857, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, S-003-1857.

Smith in 1860 to address continued conflict between James and Uriah. She explained that she had had another vision in which "Uriah and James were shown [her] a distance apart from each other, not united." This caused problems for the publication of R&H, because God could not support them while there was strife. More generally, White saw that there had "been a strengthening of the hands of one another in unbelief of the visions because the wrongs of some have been reproved." She learned that this conflict originated with the "reception of the visions given in Paris." People who had been there still complained that "Bro. White dealt to plain," but she had seen that "he dealt no plainer that the case deserved."

White claimed that Harriet and other former members of the Paris community held James' actions against him and spread gossip to other disaffected people. This negative attitude had spread to John Andrews, whose "judgment and sympathies were perverted," because he stood up for his friends in Paris, instead of" the Whites. The conflict had lapsed and relapsed: "When everything moves smoothly then past dissatisfaction and difficulties originating in Paris lie dormant; but when reproof is given the same warfare commences." White accused the Andrews and Stevens of allowing "their *feelings* and *impressions*" to serve as "evidence," so "they would not be corrected until they were overwhelmed and compelled to acknowledged the power of God." When those feelings wore off, however, "the same wrong feelings return[ed]." They needed to confess "their wrong course in opposing the testimonies of God" and support them.

In White's mind, the real problem was that she had seen "faults and wrongs of individuals who professed perfect confidence in the visions, but found fault with the

instrument" of delivering reproof. They only partially believed in the visions because of the rebukes that they did not want to hear. White insisted, however, "This is not the way God works." She asserted that "if God reproves his people through an individual" (namely, herself), then "he does not leave the one corrected to guess at matters" and to pick and choose what they will follow. She concluded by affirming that her personal feelings did not play a role in what she saw in vision: "I can see no further than the angel directs me." People who doubted the visions, like the Andrews and Stevens families, were doubting God, and they needed to repent not only of the sins that White observed in her visions, but of their lack of faith in the visions themselves.[58]

Eventually, White appeared to win over the two families, and she used their submission to her to affirm her visionary leadership role to the Sabbatarian Adventist Community. In late 1861, John Andrews submitted a "Confession" to R&H detailing his sins against the faith. He confessed that he had "not exerted that direct influence in behalf of the testimony of the Spirit of God, given through the vision to sister White, that [he] ought to have done." He said that it was "the purpose of [his] heart, not merely to believe the testimony of the visions, but to impress the importance of their testimony upon

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[58] Ellen G. White, "To Brother J.N. Andrews and Sister H.N. Smith," PH016, https://egwwritings.org/ (accessed September 8, 2012). She also explained that she saw all kinds of things in her visions, but she couldn't always recall everything she had seen until she sat down to write it out. Then, "the scenes [rose] before [her] as was presented in vision." Other times, she would not recall portions of visions until she was with the people who needed to hear them. She explained, "I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having a vision." White firmly believed that her visions and even her ability to recall them came directly from God. This process of recollection reflects that she said in a letter to the Howlands in 1850. Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Howland, August 15, 1850, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, H-012-1850

others."[59] Other members of both families also repented of their treatment of the Whites. In January 1862, for instance, Edward apologized for his wrongdoing and acknowledged that he had come to believe that God worked through the visions. In the same month, Angeline Stevens Andrews, John's wife, wrote to confess that she had been "altogether in the dark… as respects those unhappy things in Paris" and blind to her faults. She finally understood that she must "accept the visions as from the Lord." She wrote again a few days later to apologize not only for her failure to stand up for the visions, but to appreciate the hard work of James.[60]

Similar processes of correction must have occurred in the early 1860s, because a number of other prominent Adventists also published confessions in R&H in late 1861 and early 1862. Brother Wheeler admitted that he had "murmured against Bro. and Sr. White, and [had] thought them too severe, and [had] spoken against them to a few of my brethren in a way calculated to prejudice their minds against them." He also confessed that "for years" he had "had the most perfect confidence in Sr. White's visions," but had "through the temptations of Satan…been led at times…to doubt them." He affirmed his belief that "they are from the Lord" and that he would "heed the correction" he had "recently received" from the visions. Brother Rhodes also acknowledged previous

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[59] J.N. Andrews, "Confession," James White et all, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (Battle Creek: December 17, 1861), 22. In a private letter, he confessed that his worst offense had been that he had ignored James' special role in running R&H. J.N. Andrews to James and Ellen White, January 12, 1862, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001; J.N. Andrews to James White, February 2, 1862, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

[60] Edward Andrews to James and Ellen White, January 25, 1863, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001; A.S. Andrews to James and Ellen White, January 30, 1862, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001; A.S. Andrews to James and Ellen White, February 2, 1862, Ellen White Collection, Adventist Heritage Center of Southwestern Adventist University, IN-001.

unwillingness to listen to "reproofs," which had led to a "murmuring and faultfinding feeling or spirit" against the Whites. He also apologized for doubting the visions.[61]

White's visions were not acknowledged in the first meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, but evidence of their work was there. As seen in her conflict with the Andrews, her battle to have her visions accepted by Adventist leadership had been intimately intertwined in conflict over James' reputation. The General Conference's vindication of James' character at their first official meeting demonstrated that her campaign for her visions was having an effect. A group of delegates from Ohio, Michigan, New York, and other places met in Battle Creek, Michigan on May 20, 1863. The official structure of the General Conference, with a president, treasurer, and secretary and representatives from each of the state conferences was put in to place. James White was unanimously voted to hold the office of President first, but he declined to serve in the office. This in itself indicated that past grievances at Paris were being overcome.

The leadership's plans to officially recognize James' leadership and good character, however, made an even stronger statement. Earlier in March 1863, the R&H editors had requested that people with grievances against him to come forward with testimony at the General Conference meeting. The meeting minutes reported, "no one had reported any grievances pertaining to the subject in hand, according to the request in the *Review*," but they had "more than three-score and ten fervent testimonials" in his favor. They resolved that the General Conference should endeavor "to show the falsity of these

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[61] F. Wheeler, "Confession," James White et all, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: December 3, 1861), 7; S.W. Rhodes, "From Br. Rhodes," James White et all, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no. 26 (Battle Creek, MI: May 27, 1862), 182.

reports, and vindicate before the world the character and course of Brother White" by publishing the positive testimonies in R&H.[62]

The General Conference more openly acknowledged Ellen's visions and moral leadership at their Fifth Annual Meeting in 1867. They made their commitment to the visions clear with a resolution that expressed their "continued faith in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts during the gospel dispensation." They were grateful to God "that he ha[d] intimately connected the spirit of prophecy with the proclamation" of the Advent. Though White was not mentioned specifically in this resolution about the gifts that she was present in the minds of the General conference leadership is clear. In their very next resolution, they decided "to call anew the attention of parents and guardians to the work of Sister White, entitled *Appeal to Mothers*."[63] After years of struggle, she had finally been accepted, as a moral authority and a conduit of divine inspiration. When it came to social ethics, however, her influence was even clearer.

SOCIAL ETHICS

As she waged her battle for recognition through individual ethical correction, White began to have visions that impacted the development of the social ethics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by advocating for the morality of healthful living. She began by trying to correct individual unhealthful behaviors, like smoking. Through a

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[62] Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, "General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists First Annual Meeting, May 20, 1863," in "General Conference Session Minutes from 1863 to 1888 accessed online at http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=14&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True (September 10, 2012), 5.

[63] Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, "General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Fifth Annual Meeting, May 14, 1867," in "General Conference Session Minutes from 1863 to 1888 accessed online at http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=14&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True (September 10, 2012), 27.

protracted personal struggle with health problems in her own family, however, she was exposed to the potential healing powers of water cure. A vision persuaded her that Seventh-day Adventists needed to get into the business of public health by creating a facility for administering water cure, the Western Institute for Health Reform. For White, spreading good health was every bit as important as spreading the gospel message and thereby took on a moral imperative. While exposing individuals' sins was certainly important to establishing her leadership role, her visions for health reform had a longer-lasting impact on the ethics of Adventism, as her desire to make health reform a "saving" mission continues to this day.[64]

White's engagement with health reform began, unsurprisingly, with attempts to moderate individual behavior. Her initial visions warning against the use of tobacco illustrate the general process by which her prophecies on health reform spread to the mission of the Adventists Church. In her first health related visions in 1848, she "saw all those who are indulging self by using the filthy weed [tobacco], should lay it aside, and put their means to a better use." She thought that people could spend their money better and improve their health by abstaining from "useless and injurious things as tea, &c." Rather than spending their money on "rich food" and clothing people should "live a little

[64] At the time when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially founded, the Civil War had been underway for two years. Though Seventh-day Adventists opposed slavery, they abstained from politics, because they thought it distracted from spiritual duties. When the war came, White had a vision commanding Adventists to refrain from participating in the conflict altogether—even from seeking pacifist status. They believed that God would protect them, so they could spread the Adventist message, especially its new emphasis on health. Jonathan M. Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1974), 185-190. Seventh-day Adventists' anti-political stance changed over time to permit a more active participation. See, for example, Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*.

poorer, and give to the cause of God."[65] In a letter to Brother and Sister A in 1858, she again emphasized the importance of a healthy diet and warned that people who labored for the Lord needed to "seek rest of body and mind from wearing labor when they can, and should eat of nourishing, strengthening food to build up their strength."[66] From the beginning, White taught the necessity of abstaining from tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco.

This campaign to end tobacco illustrates how White's visions impacted the development of ethical behavior regarding individual health. In 1855, through a series of articles in R&H, Adventist leadership campaigned heavily against smoking tobacco by emphasizing its negative consequences for health and for its expense. They also argued that smoking tobacco could become an idol because of its addictive qualities. Although it took time, her vision forbidding tobacco inspired her followers to quit. Convinced leadership concluded that tobacco would not be tolerated in Adventist preachers—and eventually among Adventist laity.[67] White's visions on health reform, however, did not stop at the level of individual behavior.

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[65] Ellen G. White, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854), 42 in Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), 39-40.

[66] Ellen G. White, "Errors in Diet," *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 4th edition (Ellen G. White Estate, 2011), 197-201.

[67] See, for instance, J.H. Waggoner, "Tobacco", in Uriah Smith, ed., *Advent Herald and Sabbath Review*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (Battle Creek, MI: November 19, 1857), 12-13 in Numbers, *Prophetess*, 40-42, 222. Generally speaking, many Sabbatarian Adventists had been interested in health and dietary reform before the 1860s. A number of Adventists, including Joseph Bates, had been involved in temperance reform or vegetarianism during the 1830s and 1840s. The Kellogg family was raised on water cures, and Annie Smith, the sister of Uriah Smith, one of the editors of R&H, spent time in a water cure facility before she passed away in 1855. That Adventist leadership would become interested in promoting health reform among their fellowship was unsurprising. Ibid 38, 77-79.

White's social vision for the church originated in her struggles with persistent illness in her own family. In the winter of 1862-3, two of White's sons became very ill with diphtheria. At the time, she read an article written by James C. Jackson, a somewhat well known practitioner of hydropathy, or water cure. Jackson's article, "Diphtheria, Its Causes, Treatment and Cure," provided practical tips on how to help cure the illness by using water treatments. These treatments consisted of giving the sick person steaming hot baths, packing him or her in blankets, the continued application of hot cloths and massages to the extremities, and plenty of fresh, cool air. He also recommended rest and an anxiety free environment. White implemented these cures for her children, and they recovered. After a lifetime of failed treatments by traditional medicine, she was elated to find something that worked for her, so she began to promote water cures.[68]

In the summer of 1863, she had her first vision that gave heavenly endorsement to water cure. In it, she learned that bad health could be traced back to Adam and Eve. They had had everything for a healthy life in the Garden, but Eve "was intemperate in her desires." Because of her actions, "the earth also was cursed," leading to "intemperance in almost every form." Since then, humanity had fallen deeper into the curse that God laid on Adam and Eve for disobedience. White spoke about the evils of tobacco, coffee, tea and drugs, such as mercury, opium, calomel, and quinine. Instead of these harmful substances, she advocated a clean home, well-ventilated rooms, plain, wholesome

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[68] James C. Jackson, "Diphtheria, Its Causes, Treatment and Cure," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 21, no. 12 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, February 17, 1863), 89-91; Numbers 47. Jackson, like other health reformers of the nineteenth century, believed that the key to health was to discern the God-given, natural laws of the body and to follow them: "the human body is intended by its Creator… to incorporate within itself such measure of resistance to disease… if the laws of our organism were understood and obeyed…health would be the ordinary condition..."

foods—mostly grains and vegetables—and "a careful and understanding application of water" for the sick. She argued that believes should Christ's example in treating their bodies like holy temples.[69]

White's commitment to water cure increased as her family had more reason to rely upon it. In the winter of 1863-4 her sons Henry and Willie again became ill. In her desperation to help heal them, she called upon a medical doctor to treat Henry. Willie, however, received only water cures. Henry died, but Willie survived, which seemed to confirm the fact that medicine could not be trusted. In addition, other Adventists, like John N. and Angeline Stevens supported hydropathy and probably encouraged White to embrace it fully.[70]

In September 1864, James and Ellen decided to visit an official water cure facility in Dansville, New York. James Jackson operated a hydropathy institute in Dansville called "Our Home on the Hillside." Patients typically lived in the housing provided there for several weeks to several months to receive treatment from him. He treated patients with "half-baths, packs, sitz baths, plunges, and dripping sheets," and he did not give people medicine. Instead he preached "ten natural remedies:" "'First, air; second, food; third, water; fourth, sunlight; fifth, dress; sixth, exercise; seventh, sleep; eighth, rest; ninth, social influence; tenth, mental and moral forces.'"[71] Patients who stayed at "Our Home" followed a strict schedule that involved eating a mostly vegetarian diet only twice

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[69] Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. IV (Ellen G. White Estate, 2011), 106-131.
[70] Numbers, *Prophetess*, 86-90
[71] James C. Jackson, *How to Treat the Sick Without Medicine* (Dansville, NY: Austin, Jackson & Co., 1872), 25-26 in Ibid 75

a day, receiving water treatments, recreating with the other patients, and resting as much as possible. The Whites visited for three weeks, and she found her health was greatly improved by eliminating meat from her diet and eating less frequently. She began to hope to found a water cure facility directed by Adventists, thereby avoiding the worldly behavior of Jackson's patients.[72]

After a second visit to Danville,[73] White claimed that God had revealed to her that health reform was "a part of the third angel's message." Yet many Adventists did not want to listen when God showed them their health related sins. She equated their unwillingness to give up beloved, but unhealthy foods and habits to idolatry, saying, "Their taste, their appetite, is their god." It was essential, however, that "The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body," so Adventists would be "fitted for translation" at the end of the millennium. She asked, "While men and women professing godliness are diseased from the crown of their head to the soles of their feet… how can they weigh the evidences of truth and comprehend the requirements of God?"[74] Healthy living was necessary for salvation after Jesus returned.

White claimed that healthful living was indicative of godliness, and God wanted Adventists to spread the message of good health. She saw that they "should provide a

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[72] Numbers, *Prophetess*, 90-93. Numbers explains that White claimed that she included the writings of other writers to show how her visions complemented the thinking of other health reformers. She maintained that they were not her sources for her writings, which were based on divine inspiration alone. Numbers, however, argues that if you compare her writings in *How to Live* with the writings of health reformers, it is obvious that she read them before writing her visions. For my purposes, it is not important that White might have plagiarized her ideas on health, because I want to discern the impact of these visions on people who believed they were divine. Ibid 94-95, 232, 235

[73] Ibid 96-100

[74] Ellen G. White, "The Health Reform," *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. I (Ellen G. White Estate, 2011), 451-462.

home for the afflicted and those who wish to learn how to take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness." This was essential, because the sick among them were forced to go to "popular water cure institutions for the recovery of health, where there [was] no sympathy for [their] faith." Because the ill were especially susceptible to temptation, they needed a place to convalesce where they would not be surrounded with "card playing, dancing, and attending theaters." Additionally, the financial contributions required to construct and support such an institution would be a good sacrifice for many Adventists to make, who had become obsessed with accumulating property.[75]

Indicating the extent of White's growing influence, church leaders openly acknowledged White's vision to pursue health reform, and they gave it the same status as other parts of "the work" of spreading the Adventist message. At the meeting of the General Conference in May 1866, the leadership resolved to "acknowledge the health reform as set forth in the testimony of Sister White, as part of the work of God incumbent on us at this time," and they decided to "live in accordance with these principles, and… to impress their importance upon others."[76] They began raising money to construct an Adventist run health institute through the R&H. While some Adventists supported the plan immediately, the editors had to convince some believers that it was necessary to engage in investing money in the world instead of focusing on Jesus' return. Despite these objections, they managed to raise enough money to open the Western Health

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[75] Ibid

[76] Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, "General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Fourth Annual Meeting, May 16, 1866," in "General Conference Session Minutes from 1863 to 1888 accessed online at http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=14&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True (October 11, 2012), 19-20

Reform Institute (WHRI) on September 5, 1866. The Institute very quickly became a success.[77]

Though the Institute went through several ups and downs and eventually folded, White had been successful in getting the church to implement her vision for spreading good health principles beyond the Adventist fold. Indeed the WHRI was just the first of what would become a network of Adventist healthcare facilities. White saw to the establishment of another health treatment facility in Loma Linda, California in 1905, which became a large university and medical school. Medical training and medical missions also became an important part of Adventist practices, and they have established several nursing colleges throughout the U.S. White's vision of spreading the message of faith with the message of good health still thrives today.[78]

CONCLUSION

Even though she would continue to combat challenges from the male leadership of the Adventist General Conference throughout her life, by securing a place for her visions in the ethical and social concerns of the church, White created a space for herself in Adventist leadership. Adventists came to believe that God still spoke to the faithful through the spiritual gifts of visions, and her presence in their community suggested that Christ would indeed come soon. Beyond that, her visions enabled her to direct the development of Adventism by disciplining both lay people and ministers—admonishing anyone who sinned against the community (or sometimes White and her husband).

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[77] Numbers, *Prophetess*, 107ff

[78] Ibid 178ff; Anne Devereaux Jordan, *The Seventh-day Adventists: A History* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1988), 103-114.

People listened to her, because they believed the decisions they were making in creating a new orthodoxy could potentially have eternal consequences, in light of the impending Advent. Her leadership, however, remained less than absolute, because she remained outside of the official church hierarchy of male leaders, and when she died, her visions died with her—no one succeeded her visionary role. Nevertheless, during her lifetime, she helped to created community that followed a visionary ethics, turning to the guidance of a prophet to help them determine what was right and wrong.

Conclusion: The Apocalyptic versus the Progressive: Contrasting Legacies of Visionary Leadership

A silent revolution has loosed the tension of the old religious sects, and in place of the gravity and permanence of those societies of opinion, they run into freak and extravagance. In creeds never was such levity; witness the heathenisms in Christianity, the periodic "revivals," the Millennium mathematics, the peacock ritualism, the retrogression to Popery, the maundering of Mormons, the squalor of Mesmerism, the deliration of rappings, the rat and mouse revelation, thumps in table-drawers, and black art."
Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1860

By 1860—just two years before the official establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—Emerson had become disenchanted with the new religious movements he had praised twenty years earlier. "In place of the gravity and permanence of those societies of opinion" he saw "freak and extravagance." Rather than a universal tendency to morality, he witnessed "levity" in "the periodic 'revivals,' the Millennium mathematics, the peacock ritualism, the retrogression to Popery, the maundering of Mormons, the squalor of Mesmerism, the deliration of rappings, the rat and mouse revelation, thumps in the table drawers, and black art."[1] He had lost faith that the religious experiences of these groups would necessarily lead to ethical knowledge.

Emerson was not alone in his disappointment. It was common for believers to become disenchanted with their new faiths after the initial period of excitement wore off. Several of Joseph Smith's closest followers, for instance, left the Latter-day Saints after

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (New York: P.F. Collier & Sons, 1903), 179, 183-184.

conflicts with him.[2] In other cases, believers lost faith after the death or departure of their leader. When John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the Oneida Community, fled to Canada in 1879 to escape criminal charges, his community soon abandoned his principle of "complex marriage," and eventually disintegrated.[3] Thus, to assess the success of Hicks and White as leaders, the longer-term impact of their teachings must be considered. Their contrasting reputations in the years after their deaths and into the present indicate that their different expressions of visionary leadership and ethics significantly shaped the directions of their communities over time. They also point to the importance of long-standing religious and ethical considerations to the development of new religious communities in nineteenth-century America.

Elias Hicks eventually earned a reputation as a Quaker liberal, despite his somewhat conservative values. In the years immediately after his death, his followers mourned his passing, remembering him for his faithful adherence to the Inner Light and for upholding traditional Quaker practices. As Hicksite Quakers became more liberal, however, their memory of him shifted to emphasize the liberal aspects of his theology. Though not a Quaker, Walt Whitman recalled seeing Hicks speak as a young boy. He wrote that despite his "almost absurd saturation in cut and dried biblical phraseology," he

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[2] Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer brothers, who had witnessed Smith's translation of the *Book of Mormon*, all defected from the church (or were excommunicated) over power struggles with him. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural biography of Mormonism's founder* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 347ff.

[3] Noyes fled to Canada before knowing what specific charges were going to be laid against him. By 1879, he was in his seventies, and his followers had already begun to question his leadership abilities. When he left them, the community split between people who wanted to remain loyal to the letter of his teachings and those who wanted to practice traditional marriage again. Once the community voted to adopt monogamy, they soon abandoned their communist practices as well. Spencer Klaw, *Without Sin: The Life and Death of the Oneida Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 1-9, 232ff.

gave "the service of pointing to the fountain of all naked theology, all religion, all worship, all the truth to which you are possibly eligible—namely in *yourself* and your inherent relations."[4] To Whitman, Hicks represented the best aspects of religion, because his reliance on revelation directed people inward. While liberal Hicksites in the late nineteenth century might not have agreed with Whitman's dismissal of the Christian aspects of Hicks' thinking, they also considered him a liberal, and focused even more on continuing revelation. Even in the mid-twentieth century, he was remembered as a theological and social liberal, in keeping with the general reputation of Hicksite Quakers of the time.[5]

Only in the last ten years have scholars begun to revisit Hicks' ideas, and to see his theological complexity. They have begun to present him as someone who could promote the idea of progressive revelation while simultaneously insisting on maintaining the separate, quietist quality of eighteenth-century Quakerism.[6] Nevertheless, among Quakers from the Hicksite tradition, Hicks' belief in progressive revelation has been maintained, and, to they extent that they remember him at all, his reputation among them is basically positive.

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[4] Walt Whitman, "Notes (such as they are) found on Elias Hicks," *November Boughs* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1888), 119.

[5] Thomas Hamm, "The Hicksite Quaker World, 1875-1900," *Quaker History*, vol. 89, no. 2 (2000). The mid-twentieth century biography of Hicks was subtitled, "Quaker Liberal." Bliss Forbush, *Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

[6] Paul Buckley in particular has led renewed scholarly interest in Hicks by publishing a new, more extensive version of his journal and a new edited volume of his letters. In the introduction to the volume of letters, Buckley points out that Hicks cannot simply be classified as a liberal. Paul Buckley, "Introduction," *Dear Friend: Letters & Essays of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2011), xvi.

Ellen White's reputation and lasting impact have been heavily contested among Seventh-day Adventists. Even after recognizing her at the General Conference meeting of 1867, they still questioned her abilities as a prophet periodically. After her husband died in 1881, she became more independent in exercising her authority, but the leadership of the General Conference tried to curtail her influence in various ways—including exiling her from the Adventist center of power in Washington, D.C. by sending her on mission trip to Australia from 1891 to 1900. Nevertheless, many Adventists turned to her visionary writings on parenting, diet, and theology for guidance in their day-to-day lives.[7]

Since her death in 1915, her visionary leadership has occasionally been reexamined, especially because no one inherited her prophetic ability after she died.[8] Especially in the 1970s and 80s, Adventist scholars interrogated not only her veracity, but her sanity. Some argued that she stole large portions of her visions from contemporary authors on health or theology. Others suggested that her visions resulted from her childhood head injury.[9] Today Adventists tend to fall into two camps—those who believe

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[7] Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century," (PhD Dissertation: The Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 52-3, 150ff

[8] Interestingly, White did not have a successor to her prophetic abilities upon her death. When she died, her family, especially her son Willie, fought with the leadership of the General Conference about who should control her writings. Did the prophetic legacy remain in her family or transfer to the management of the church? Ultimately the church gained control over her writings, although they are administered separately from the main church archives at the Ellen G. White Foundation in Silver Spring, Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C. See Gilbert M. Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage: Issues in the Conflict for Control of the Ellen G. White Publications, 1930-1939* (Mauk Lek, Thailand: Institute Press, 2006).

[9] Ronald L. Numbers and Walter T. Rea in particular accused White of plagiarizing her visions. See chapter one, chapter 1, note 51. Jonathan M. Bulter argued that White's visions did not result from, but rather alleviated her mental problems. Jonathan M. Butler, "Prophesy, Gender, and Culture: Ellen Gould Harmon [White] and the Roots of Seventh-day Adventism," *Religion and American Culture* 6, no. 1 (1991): 3-29.

that White was divinely inspired, and those who wish to remain Adventists, but question the genuineness of her inspiration.[10]

On the surface, Hicks' and White's religious experiences shared certain similarities in terms of their physical side effects and their ethical content, and both argued that visions and revelations were necessary for healthy Christian community. They each also advocated various kinds of social reform. Yet, despite these commonalities, they created communities that reflected their divergent leadership styles and different relationships to their religious experiences. These differences help to explain the contrast in the way that their communities remember them. They also demonstrate that in order to more fully comprehend the development of nineteenth-century American religious groups, scholars must consider the ethical appeal of visionary leadership, and the complex negotiations between believers and their prophets in shaping communal ideals. The ideas conveyed in the revelatory and visionary experiences of leaders have consequences for their communities beyond doctrinal prescriptions, especially in providing the ethical guidelines that shape the daily interactions of community members. Whereas White's visionary ethics—practiced with the certainty of the imminent Second Coming—put her at the center of the process of creating community ethics, Hicks' progressive ethos of revelation made him secondary to the

[10] The liberal wing of Seventh-day Adventism is generally represented by periodicals like *Spectrum* and *Adventism Today*. Many of these Adventists advocate a more critical view of White's prophecies and other writings. They are in a numerical minority within Seventh-day Adventism. For an overview of the differences between these two camps of Adventist thinking, see Alden L. Thompson's popular book *Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2009). Of course, Adventists' beliefs about White's inspiration cover a range of possibilities and can only loosely be categorized as conservative and liberal.

practice of revelation itself. In the end, the two communities' responses to the revelatory and visionary claims of their leaders reveal that Ann Taves' approach to studying religious experiences cannot fully circumvent the problem of religious experiences' interiority.

Antebellum America

The ministries of Hicks and White collectively spanned approximately 150 years, but they both founded their communities during the tumult and excitement of the antebellum period. Though disparate in their messages and leadership styles, comparing their lives and the communities they built provides important insight into religious experiences in nineteenth-century America. The debates surrounding their visionary leadership within their communities suggest that scholars must be mindful of longer-term concerns within the history Christianity (and perhaps religious history in general) to answer questions about how best to live. Their success as leaders points to the importance of ethics in studying religious communities, as the revelations and visions of leaders have implications for the way that these groups develop. Finally, the processes of negotiation between believers and the visionary leaders demonstrate that the power dynamics within a group depend on a variety of factors beyond simple class divisions.

Hicks' and White's missions to create communities occurred within a longer history of Christian concerns about how best to live together, demonstrating that scholars must consider the ways that believers understood the goals of their communities. Hicks wanted to prove that his views on revelation upheld the teachings of the earliest Friends. He and his followers believed that their emphasis on the Inner Light best represented

historical Quakerism. White and her followers had to answer the questions of skeptics who thought that visions were unbiblical. Yet, in a broader sense, both dealt with issues that had affected believers for a long time, as they grappled with the trustworthiness of individual inspiration and debated the extent of its influence on beliefs and practices. With their interest in reform and their engagement, to varying degrees, in the revivals of the first half of the nineteenth century, Hicks and White were fully representative of the era in which they lived. Yet they and their followers were cognizant of their engagement in community-building projects with deep roots.

The lives and ministries of Hicks and White definitively display the centrality of ethical and moral concerns, especially those related to interpersonal relationships, in the development of religious communities in nineteenth-century America.[11] In spreading his message of adherence to the Inner Light, Hicks made not only a theological claim, but an ethical one. He sought to persuade his fellow Quakers that revelation was the key to living rightly in community. Without this guide, they would fail to address the sins of their particular meetings, and they would not know how God wanted them to live in community or in relation to broader society. White also argued for the ethical importance of visions to her community. Her visions served as a check to the church, intended to inform them when they had strayed from the right path. They also instructed individuals to repent of their sins and laid out plans for the community's engagement with the wider world.

[11] I do not mean to limit this observation solely to nineteenth-century America, but simply to emphasize that it is especially true for this era.

Hicks and White were not the only nineteenth-century leaders to foreground these ethics in their communities. Joseph Smith's first vision promised him that he discover new divine truth for the here and now. Along with new doctrines, his many revelations instructed his followers ethically—about what to eat, where to go, and whom to marry (and how to marry), among other things.[12] John Humphrey Noyes believed that he had achieved human perfection here on earth, and he taught his followers his methods for achieving that perfection in community.[13] Later in the nineteenth century, Mary Baker Eddy experienced a revelation in which she learned that the key to moral living was using the mind to heal the body.[14] They and many other nineteenth-century visionary leaders demonstrated that coming together in community necessitated not only shared belief but a method for right living.

Ethical issues are as central to understanding antebellum religious communities as other sociological factors, because they played an important role in determining how the communities developed and who would be attracted to them. While scholars have not ignored the ethical concerns of nineteenth-century Americans, it is clear that they have not sufficiently explored the degree to which these ethical "visions" (in both senses of the

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[12] See generally, *The Doctrine and Covenants and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints & The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013).

[13] See generally, Klaw, *Without Sin*; and George Wallingford Noyes, ed., *Religious Experience of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923).

[14] Eddy dated the beginnings of the Christian Science to her recovery from a fall on a patch of ice in 1866—shortly after the death of her mentor Phineas P. Quimby. Although questions remain about the extent of her injuries at the time, she claimed that she read Matthew 9:2 and suddenly understood the principle of self-healing, revealed in the scriptures. Her revelation was more like Hicks'—a conscious flash of insight, rather than the heavenly scenes of Smith's or White's visions. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. II (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975), 530-536; and Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998), 161-168; Mary Baker G. Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston, MA: Allison V. Stewart, 1909), 24-29.

word) mattered to all religious communities of the era. Visionary leaders thought that in sharing their divine communications, they would change not only the way that people believed, but the way that they lived. Thus, we must look to the visions, trances, revelations, and dreams of nineteenth century religious leaders not only as a source of intellectual or theological history, but as a guide to comprehending how some Americans sought to live.[15]

Finally, the processes of give and take between Hicks and White and their followers display the intricacies of power relationships within religious communities. Both established positions of authority over their communities to varying degrees. He was clearly the leading figure of the group of Quakers who protested the leadership of evangelical Friends. Their opponents gave them his name (Hicksites), and they debated his ideas in their pamphlet wars. Similarly, by the time the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded, White had gained respect of most Adventists as the prophet and visionary for the church. Her role in guiding church doctrine was undeniable, though contested.

Neither Hicks nor White, however, held absolute power. For all his influence, in many ways he did not wield power in ways expected of visionary leaders. He presented an ethical vision for Quaker communities that others believed in, thereby solidifying his moral authority. He did not mastermind the Separation itself, however, and was not

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[15] Scholars of early Mormon history have done a better job of demonstrating the consequences of Joseph Smith's visions to the ethical practices of Latter-day Saints. See Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*. Robert H. Abzug has also argued for the importance of cosmology to the actions of various religious leaders and cultural reforms in antebellum America. Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*: *American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). My study differs from Bushman's by including a comparative aspect and from Abzug's by situating the cosmologies of religious in their communities.

present in Philadelphia for its initiation. White's rise to power was fraught with challenges to the veracity of her visions and to the soundness of her leadership. Even Adventist leaders questioned the soundness of her visions and accused her of seeing things in her visions that were to her benefit. When most Adventists had finally recognized her prophetic abilities, she remained outside the existing church power structures, making her influence somewhat decentralized.

Though his followers disputed his ideas, Hicks' right to lead was never challenged in the way that White's was, suggesting that their genders affected the ways that their communities perceived them. Quakers as a general rule supported women's leadership more readily than most other contemporary Protestant groups, and women frequently played important roles in the Separation. Some of Hicks staunchest opponents were evangelical women from England, like Anna Braithwaite, while Priscilla Hunt briefly shared the spotlight with Hicks as a standard-bearer for the ethos of revelation. Yet, female Friends were nevertheless kept from holding the highest level of influence in the meeting hierarchy, instead holding subordinate and separate women's meetings for business and for discipline. In addition, though women had led reform movements within the Society in the past, none of them had a scope of influence equal to Hicks'.[16]

As a female visionary, White was not alone among nineteenth-century women. Rebecca Cox Jackson and Mary Baker Eddy both led movements, and, though not visionary leaders, women like Catherine Booth, who helped her husband found the

[16] Hannah Barnard's New Light movement, for instance, garnered a relatively small number of followers in comparison to the forty percent of American Friends that sided with Hicks in the Separation of 1827-28. See Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 43.

Salvation Army, and Alma White, who founded the Pillar of Fire Church, exerted considerable power over their communities.[17] Nevertheless, as a woman, White's power among Seventh-day Adventists was restricted to a certain degree. Only men held leadership positions as ministers, editors of church newspapers, or members of the General Council. Even though she exercised tremendous influence in affirming doctrine and disciplining individual behavior, White was never formally accepted into the Church's hierarchical governance structures. This naturally generated conflict when she elected to ignore the wishes of the men in charge, but she often chose to acquiesce to their authority. It is possible that had she been male, she would have possessed a firmer hold on the leadership of the church, as other male prophets like Joseph Smith, Jr. had.[18]

Nevertheless, the fact that both Hicks and White dealt with dissension and an imperfect hold on their authority sheds light on the complexity of power relationships within communities. Visionary leaders in particular needed their followers' trust in their methods for community cohesion, because their authority depended so much on their followers' acceptance of their claims of divine inspiration. Thus, both Hicks and White had to justify themselves to their supporters and detractors, and, even when people chose

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[17] On Catherine Booth's and Alma White's similarities to Ellen White, see generally Graybill, "Power of Prophecy."

[18] Of course women like Jemima Wilkerson, the Universal Public Friend, and Mother Ann Lee, the leader of the Shakers, exerted more control over their communities, but those groups never reached the eventual size of Seventh-day Adventists. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. I (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975), 594-599. Mary Baker Eddy more successfully centralized power to her leadership position in the Church of Jesus Christ (Scientist). At the end of her life, however, she led her movement in seclusion at her home, living in fear of psychological attacks from former students and other opponents. Ibid, Vol. II, 533-534. Other scholars have also pointed out that despite her leadership role, White promoted conservative gender relations, encouraging women to obey their husbands and focus on motherhood. Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

to submit to their authority, that submission was fragile. It seems likely that similar studies of community interactions—even in cases without a visionary leader—would reveal power relationships that go beyond class conflict and emphasize the power that followers sometimes exercise over their leaders.[19]

Additionally, especially in an era in which many Americans had such freedom to choose to follow one prophet or another, the specific ethical and social visions presented by visionary leaders affected individuals' decisions about which community to join, perhaps as much as other sociological factors. In Hicks' case, people who chose to side with him may have shared certain socio-economic characteristics.[20] Nevertheless, those who sided with him also believed in the ethical aspects of his teachings—whether it was his staunch adherence to the Inner Light above all or his support of certain traditional Quaker values. In White's case, her fellow ex-Millerites chose to follow her visions only after a protracted battle to prove that she was a genuine visionary. People chose to submit to her authority only once they had been convinced of the rightness of her moral vision, believing that assent to her leadership would guide them to live the best way possible.[21]

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[19] Although it might be difficult to find the data, it would be interesting to find out more about the people who, for instance, joined churches after the revivals of Finney. Certainly employers must have exercised influence over their employees. Nevertheless, by joining in community with them, employees might have been able to restore some of the humanity that was being lost in their working relationships due to proto-industrialism. I do not mean to suggest that these were relationships in which each party had equal power, but simply that employees might have had their own reasons for converting beyond coercion. See Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978, 2004).

[20] Scholars of the Hicksite Separation have argued that most of Hicks' supporters tended to be rural dwellers, except for certain urban followers who liked the rationalistic aspects of his thought. See H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: the Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 47ff.

[21] Of course, it is impossible to know why every person chose to join one community over another, but, as Hicks' and Whites' followers demonstrated, the ethical visions of each for their communities were a

REVELATORY AND VISIONARY PROCESSES

Hicks and White each participated in the wider Christian culture of prophetic dreams, revelations, and visions. They both recalled feeling the Spirit's pull early in their childhood, learning from a young age to look for powerful divine communication as an indication that they were on the right path. As they grew into adulthood and began lifelong careers as visionary leaders, each continued to rely on their religious experiences and made them a central part of their ministry to others in their spiritual communities. Despite differences in the physical qualities of their revelations and visions, Hicks' and White's revelations and visions were similar in creating in intense physical side effects and providing ethical guidance. Ultimately, each presented him- or her-self as a model of appropriate and genuine religious experience, demonstrating the importance of spiritual autobiography as a source of the ethics of visionary leadership.

Both experienced visionary dreams of spiritual significance. Their dreams happened only during regular sleep and tended to have elements of prophecy in them. They were especially remarkable for their dramatic imagery. Hicks, for example, dreamt about "a religious black man" who would guide him to a meeting place, and he believed that his dream led him to that man when visiting Jamaica, New York. White dreamt of her husband swimming in a river, and she believed that he would remain healthy during his travels.[22]

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significant factor in accepting their leadership. This suggests that the "democratic" qualities of revivalist preachers for which Nathan Hatch argues were only one aspect of their appeal to nineteenth-century Americans. Nathan Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[22] See above pp. 46-47, 50, 134

Hicks' and White's religious experiences during daytime, however, contrasted both in terms of the process of reception and in terms of their visual content. Hicks' revelations typically occurred after a period of public or private silent contemplation, and they lacked visual content. Instead, he retained consciousness during the entire revelatory experience. He understood his revelations to involve the rational aspect of his mind, as the Holy Spirit informed his reason what he was supposed to say. By contrast, when White had a vision, she typically lost consciousness, witnessing the same bright imagery of dreams. The Holy Spirit, however, was also essential to White's visions. She explained that she would be filled with the Holy Spirit prior to losing consciousness and being "taken off in vision."[23]

Hicks and White experienced similar physical side effects of their religious experiences. His revelations often exhausted him. He described the process of receiving revelation as a "travail" that could be taxing—creating sensations of heat or cold, such as the time when he visited Epping, New Hampshire in 1793. White's visions drained her energy, and sometimes altered her vision temporarily, making the colors of the world appear less brilliant than those of her visions. Nevertheless, the side effects of his revelations were somewhat less intense than hers. Although he once mentioned that a revelation caused him to feel as though he could not move his limbs, he typically did not manifest other physical symptoms aside from exhaustion. She, however, had a variety of more unusual physical side effects from her visions. She was sometimes paralyzed, as

[23] See above pp. 56-59, 140-148

though in a trance, or she occasionally exhibited extreme strength, such as when she held a bible for an hour and a half. In either case, being a prophet was clearly grueling work.[24]

Hicks' and White's likeminded approaches to the Holy Spirit probably resulted from their common Protestant background, which privileged individual knowledge of faith, unmediated by church leadership. They each followed the instruction of their revelations and visions in their daily lives, and advocated for the importance of individual experience of the Holy Spirit. He argued that each individual must experience the Holy Spirit for him or herself in order to foster genuine Christian community, and he believed that everyone would eventually come to realize the same truths through this process. She also claimed that each person should have his or her own regular connection to the Holy Spirit. This was important in order for all individuals to experience God's true power and to know the truth.[25]

Hicks and White also thought that displays of religious fanaticism were inappropriate. He, however, would have thought that her religious services displayed fanaticism. He disapproved of the "groanings" of a Methodist, so Adventists' worship would undoubtedly have appeared inappropriate to him. White by contrast did not disapprove of emotional displays, as long as they resulted from an authentic struggle with the Spirit. These differences, of course, can be explained by the fact that Quakers and

[24] See above pp. 53-54, 140-148
[25] See above pp. 69-72, 158-161

Adventists hailed from distinct worship traditions in the first place. Nevertheless, for both proposed limits to displays of religious enthusiasm.[26]

Regardless of the differences of their visionary processes, Hicks and White received similar kinds of inspiration from their religious experiences. Both looked to the Spirit for guidance in their ministerial duties. Both traveled extensively for their ministry, but would not depart until God made it obvious that they should go. He waited for a clear "opening" to tell him that it was God's will for him to travel; she frequently had dreams or visions related to her family's decisions to travel. They both claimed to discern the needs and sins of their communities through their visions and revelations. He thought that his revelations about what to preach were "suited to the states" of particular meetings at particular times and places. She also received timely visions about theology or about the sins of individuals in the Adventist community. To him, this inspiration was potentially available to all Friends. To her, the gift of prophecy indicated that God had set apart Seventh-day Adventists, and occurred rarely.[27]

Both received divine instruction related to their health problems. White's visions typically advised her about whether she and her family would recover from particular illnesses or encouraged her to persevere through illness. Hicks' revelations did not speak directly to his health conditions, but he received revelations that told him to travel despite illness. Both found the strength to go on after divine intervention. She viewed illness as a challenge from Satan, or as a sign of potential sin. For him, illness was simply illness. He

[26] See above pp. 59-60, 156-158
[27] See above pp. 73ff, 167ff, 174ff, 180ff

simply needed to follow the Spirit's leadings even when ill, or he would be sinning by not following its instruction.[28]

Hicks and White each had religious experiences related to ethical problems—individual or social. Both had visions or revelations that related to broader social issues: he promoted antislavery, and she promoted health reform. The kinds of personal shortcomings they addressed were sometimes different. He described numerous instances of the Spirit chiding him and then helping him to overcome specific sins that he had committed, like dancing, hunting for sport, or spending time in the company of sexually immoral people. In her autobiography, she did not discuss such specific sins. Rather, she reported that Angels promised to help her overcome pride about her spiritual gifts or her reluctance to share her visions.[29]

By telling the stories of their lives, Hicks and White offered themselves as models of appropriate religious experiences. Although they shaped the telling of their autobiographies to emphasize their leadership potential, their methods of self-presentation provide insight into the ways that they understood their revelations and their ethical goals for their communities. As they styled themselves, so they hoped their followers would as well. By highlighting his childhood visions and dreams, he implied that he had learned how to follow the Inner Light even before he really knew what it meant to do so. In his multiple descriptions of his visits to Quaker meetings across the United States throughout his life, he provided frequent examples of his success as

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[28] See above pp. 46, 134-138
[29] See above pp. 41-42, 62ff, 138-140

minister, suggesting that he was a living embodiment of his ethos of revelation. His revelations more often than not were "suited to the states" of the Friends he met, and his work as a minister demonstrated his submission to the Light, wherever it might lead.

White similarly used her autobiography to present herself as a recipient of genuine revelation. Her girlhood stories served the purpose of showing heavenly rather than diabolic influence over her mental state, and in her battles with mesmerists she sought to establish her loss of control over her body as a godly form of religious expression. Ultimately, by describing her own submission to her visions, she modeled for her followers the way that she wanted them to respond to them: by treating them as God's direction, regardless of their personal feelings about her as the visionary.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The ethical guidance of Hicks' and White's religious experiences related not only to specific sins or failings of each individual, but it also helped each of them know how to live more generally—telling them where they should go; with whom they should interact and how; and when to overcome illness and when to rest. Despite similarities in the methods they used to spread their messages, they manifested experiences that seemed uniquely adapted to their environments. They also explained them in a manner suited to their communities. Even though each ascribed to the ethos that people should follow the Holy Spirit in every aspect of life, the communities they created had contrasting relationships to the revelations and visions that conveyed God's will. Whereas Hicks created a general reliance on revelation, an ethos of revelation, White's visions created a visionary ethics in which one visionary relayed divine messages. These differences relate

to their divergent goals. He sought only to reform an existing community and created a new community by accident; she employed her visions in pursuit of creating a new orthodoxy from the remains of Millerism.

In the end these contrasts reveal the significance of their different understandings of the trajectory of history and the role of religious experiences in it. Hicks' belief that revelation was progressive meant that the revelator himself was not important. Even as his ethos of revelation lives on, his particular influence over Hicksites declined. White's belief that history was building to an apocalypse meant that the content of her visions and her trustworthiness were of the utmost importance. If her prophecies proved false, then the entire community would be negatively affected, possibly losing the opportunity to be prepared for the Advent. Thus, her specific legacy as a prophet remains equally important and fraught.

As nineteenth-century ministers, Hicks and White used similar methods to convey their messages. Both relied on regular travel to the believers within their community. Hicks made fifty-nine long journeys during his lifetime, traveling up into Canada, west to Indiana, and even to meetings in the Carolinas. These trips enabled him to form lasting relationships with Friends across the United States.[30] White also traveled regularly for her ministry. As a teenager, she traveled to the meetings of Adventists who had been faithful to William Miller's cause. Throughout her adult life she visited Adventist Churches from

[30] Paul Buckley, "Introduction," *The Journal of Elias Hicks* (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), xv.

coast to coast in the United States, and she made a ten-year trip to Australia to build the churches there. These face-to-face meetings helped her to solidify her leadership role.

Hicks and White also engaged in regular letter writing to connect to close friends and followers and to communicate with new followers. He wrote many letters to friends, family, and strangers who inquired about his teachings. Sometimes his letters proved to be a source of trouble, when his unusual theological ideas were leaked to the broader Quaker community in pamphlet form. He even lost friends this way. Nevertheless, his letters kept him in touch with his family while he traveled and with supporters when he rested from his ministerial journeys. White's letters proved similarly useful for maintaining relationships with friends, supporters, and family while she traveled. They were also important to her mission to discipline the sins of individual Adventists, as she often sent the rebukes of her visions in letters people.[31]

These methods—travel and letters—were essential to maintaining cohesion between the local communities in which Hicks' and White's followers lived, and the metaphorical community of all Friends or all Adventists. Traveling to various meetings and churches in different cities and towns allowed each leader to address the specific sins and interpersonal problems plaguing particular groups of believers. Yet, they simultaneously created a sense of a larger community of believers by moving from group to group. As they did so, they not only spoke about these larger faith communities, but forged bonds of friendship that reinforced their metaphorical communities. Of course this was not a seamless process. Both Hicks and White encountered opposition both from

[31] See above pp. 90ff, 180ff

members of their community and from outsiders. This opposition, however, sometimes served further to unite the community, because the discipline that each administered enabled them to identify true believers and, especially in White's case, to exclude people who did not subscribe to the community's beliefs.[32]

Hicks and White both referred to their religious experiences as evidence for their beliefs. When his friend old friend Moses Brown expressed his dissatisfaction with his teachings about the virgin birth and scripture, Hicks explained that he written those ideas (this time in a letter to Nathan Shoemaker) "in the sincerity of [his] heart, and innocency of [his] hands…" He appealed to his revelations for legitimacy.[33] In her nearly constant struggles with the Andrews and Stevens families, White consistently reminded them of the necessity of submitting to the visions—even when they did not like the visionary.[34]

Both Hicks and White grounded their ministries, and thereby their right to speak on ethical and spiritual matters, on their revelations and visions. Yet, their communities had to choose to accept their divine testimony. One important factor in fostering this trust was that each prophet *had experiences* that generally met with the expectations of their communities regarding appropriate expressions of divine communication. Hicks' silent

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[32] Thomas Tweed's suggestion that religion functions to help people "inhabit ever-widening spaces: the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos" certainly applies to the Hicksites and Adventists, who came to see themselves as part of a larger religious community within the United States and, especially for the Adventists, across the world. In the initial phases of creating this sense of communal identity, the movement of Hicks and White among the local churches within their purview served to solidify the sense that their larger, religious communities in fact dwelled throughout the United States. Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: a Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 83.

[33] Elias Hicks, "Letter to Nathan Shoemaker," *Letters of Elias Hicks Including also a few Short Essays, written on Several Occasions, Mostly Illustrative of his Doctrinal Views* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1834), 124-129; Elias Hicks, "Letter to Moses Brown," Ibid 171-176.

[34] See above pp. 192ff

revelations represented typical practice for eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Friends, whose worship services had become more subdued than the ecstatic expressions of the first generations of Quakers. White's visions were somewhat less common for some Adventists, especially those coming from groups like the Christian Connection, which taught that God no longer spoke directly to his followers. Nevertheless, her loss of consciousness, falling down, and other emotional religious experiences would not have been uncommon in the Methodist tradition in which she grew up.

That Hicks and White both exhibited religious experiences in accordance with their communities' expectations suggests that visionary leaders had to demonstrate behaviors familiar to the group. When those behaviors appeared unfamiliar, they had to be able to justify these behaviors, as White's supporters did in the columns of *Review & Herald*.[35] Even Joseph Smith, Jr., who claimed to see angels and to translate with seer stone, drew upon folk religious practices that would have been familiar to people in antebellum America.[36] Quakers would not have accepted Hicks if he had not behaved like a Quaker. Many of White's supporters recognized her visionary trances, which were only somewhat atypical for Methodists.

In addition, Hicks and White theorized about their experiences in terms that were not only Christian, but specific to their denominational backgrounds. Thus, even though their physical experiences had some similarities, the ways that they understood and

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[35] See above pp. 174ff

[36] On the folk religious origins of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s seer stones, see Mark Ashurt-McGee's excellent study, "A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet" (MA Thesis, Utah State University, 2000).

explained them differed. White, for instance, believed in the possibility and reality of miracles, whereas Hicks did not. She described numerous instances of healing by prayer in her autobiography. He, however, argued that outward miracles were a sign of spiritual weakness and were unnecessary during the era of the spiritual dispensation.[37] Once when his horse became lame on the way out of a city, he said that it should not be seen as a sign that he needed to return there.[38] She, however, thought that when she and her family had survived a train crash, it was only through the saving hand of God.[39]

Even though they both experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, Hicks and White conceived dissimilarly of the workings of the spiritual world. She admitted readily to a connection between the spiritual and physical. She saw the actions of the Holy Spirit or evil spirits at every turn—in setbacks in her ministry or publishing endeavors and especially in illness. Disease indicated sin or of Satan's attempts to distract God's people.[40] Hicks sometimes wrote about Satan, but his references to evil's presence in the world tended to relate to the moral decline of the Society of Friends. Additionally, he believed in a much more limited connection between the body and spirit. He argued that God "does not speak to the outward senses": he would not appear to his followers as he

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[37] The "spiritual dispensation" refers to Quaker belief that after Jesus' death a new covenant was instated, replacing the legal covenant God and made with the Jews. I discuss this in chapter two.

[38] Elias Hicks, *The Journal of Elias Hicks*, Paul Buckley, ed. (San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2009), 78.

[39] Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by herself; With a Sketch of her Subsequent Labors and of her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 153-154. This contrast supports the claims of other scholars that what makes a particular experience "religious" is that it is believed to require a religious explanation in the first place. Rather than being irreducible phenomena, religious experiences require some knowledge of the divine to be understood as religious in the first place. Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of CA Press, 1985), 18-23, 165; and Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[40] See above pp. 134-138

had appeared to the Jews under the outward covenant; he would not perform miracles; and he would not interfere in the material world in the way that he used to. This did not mean that there was no connection between spirit and body. Rather, the body had "appetites," and the spirit was required to regulate them to keep from sin.[41]

Even though they thought that the Holy Spirit worked differently, both Hicks and White worked with their followers to form communities that put religious experiences at the center of their belief and practice. Nevertheless, the relationships of those communities to those experiences differed. Whereas he desired only to reform an existing community, she endeavored to create a new orthodoxy altogether. Hicks supported an ethos of revelation, because he believed that this approach would help Friends return to their roots and to curtail conflicts over doctrine. If revelation was their guide, then Friends could reasonably disagree about the nature (or existence) of the Trinity. White, however, ultimately promoted her specific visions as the only ones from God.

Hicks' view that revelation would progress, revealing new, better ethical truths inspired him to persevere in fostering communal revelatory experiences for his entire life. He focused on the spiritual "states" of the people whom he visited during his many ministerial journeys, emphasizing the need to follow the Inner Light from day to day and generation to generation. For him, this meant upholding certain aspects of eighteenth-century Quietism—plain dress and speech and separation from other denominations in particular. He also hoped, however, that the Light would inspire believers to embrace new ethical standards, as it had inspired Friends to oppose slavery. He thought that these

[41] See above pp. 56-59

new ethical issues might be things that they could not even conceive of now, as he speculated that people might learn to eat in a more humane way in the future.[42] In the end, he inspired his followers to embrace an ethos of revelation—a belief that listening to the Light's continuing messages was of the utmost ethical concern for the community to live according to God's will.

Believing that the world would soon come to an apocalyptic end, White also sought to reform the spiritual condition of her followers through visionary testimonies that corrected their individual sins. Often this entailed addressing interpersonal problems caused by pride or inappropriate behavior. Her visions, however, also spoke to broader social issues. In particular, in the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she saw in visions that living in a healthy way—free from tobacco, alcohol, and even meat—was a matter of spiritual importance. An unhealthy body could not be an appropriate spiritual temple for the Lord. Beyond individual behaviors, her visions motivated Adventists to found the Western Health Reform Institute, beginning a commitment to public health that continues today. Behind all these teachings, she underscored that obedience was imperative to avoid being excluded from the heavenly kingdom on judgment day.[43]

Although both Hicks and White had a lasting impact on their communities, their legacies as prophets diverged significantly over time. Although many Hicksites upheld his Quietist views immediately after his death, as time went by the community developed

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[42] See above pp. 62-68
[43] Se above pp. 200-207

new commitments to social ethics, as the Light directed them. Hicksites no longer upheld Hicks' specific revelations, and he became less important to their identity. History progressed for them the way that he claimed it would. New revelations led them down new ethical pathways, making his ethos of revelation his only teaching of lasting significance. By contrast, White and the Seventh-day Adventists created a form of visionary leadership that relies almost solely on the visionary to tell them what God wants—a visionary ethics. Although her prophetic gift died with her, her legacy remains important to the Adventist community: if she was a charlatan, following her visions could have negative cosmic consequences.[44]

Their contrasting approaches to community building based on revelation account for the differences in their long-term legacies as prophets. In an ethos of revelation, the prophet becomes less important over time, even if the community remains committed to continuing revelation in general. With visionary ethics, however, the specific revelations of the prophet maintain a central place in community belief, making the veracity of the visionary leader an issue of continued importance. Hicks supported an ethos that was guided by revelation as found in the community of believers, not as found in a specific revelator. The long-term implication of this ethical philosophy was that his fellow

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[44] The models of visionary leadership demonstrated by Hicks and White compare interestingly to other contemporary leaders. Joseph Smith in some ways created a community that combined the strategies of Hicks and White. Like White, Smith became the only individual to receive revelation and have visions on behalf of the entire Latter-day Saints Church. Yet, like Hicks, he believed that all people could receive revelation for themselves. He thus combined both the hierarchical and democratic possibilities for revelation. His legacy has been hotly debated, much like White's. This solidifies the point that the trustworthiness of leaders in communities that rely on one visionary leader will remain an important concern for the spiritual community long after the leader has died. Sara M. Patterson, "Divine Revelations/Delusions Revealed: Historical Understandings of Revelation in Debates over Mormonism" (Claremont Graduate University, 2005), 26.

Quakers did not hold to his memory or his teachings as law. White, however, participated in a visionary ethics that emphasized the need for a leader with the gift of prophecy, indicating that not everyone would be able to receive visions and prophecies. This gave her a longer lasting legacy as a leader than, but also made her subject to intense scrutiny. Both, however, were successful in creating communities that lasted beyond their lifetimes—something that many of their contemporaries were not able to achieve.

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Ultimately, my comparison of Hicks and White and their communities has broader implications for the study of religious experiences. Using Ann Taves' methodology to study these groups reveals that religious experiences were in many ways communal products: from the physical manifestations to the settings to the content of their religious experiences, Hicks' and White's revelations and visions reflected the influence of their communities on them. In addition, focusing on the processes by which their divine revelations were adopted by their followers demonstrates the ways that visionary leaders depended on their communities to grant their religious experiences divine status. Yet, in contesting their leaders' visionary claims, Quakers and Adventists revealed that they understood visions and revelations the way that William James presented them—as individual experiences, whose content was unavailable to anyone outside the individual. Ultimately believers evaluated the authenticity of their leaders' experiences in ways both Tavesian and Jamesian: by assessing not only whether they followed community procedures and doctrines, but whether they produced "good fruit."

Taves' model for studying religious experiences as a product of communal processes provides important insight into both the Hicksite and Adventist communities.

In particular, the processes of having, recording, and reporting religious experiences typically depended on a community of witnesses. Though James identified religious experiences as solitary events, the ministries of Hicks and White show that very often their revelations and visions occurred in public settings, especially during worship meetings. The process for recording their divine communications was also communal. Hicks' revelations usually gave way to sermons. Quaker sermons, however, typically were not scripted, so Hicks' revelations exist today only because other people wrote down what he said and preserved it for posterity. Because she lost consciousness during her visions, the physical side effects of White's trances had to be witnessed and reported by observers in her community. Though her followers had to rely on White's descriptions of what occurred in her visions after she regained consciousness, they played an important role in disseminating her visions through letters and Adventist newspapers.

In addition, the form and the content of the visions and revelations of White and Hicks related directly to the communities out of which they emerged—demonstrating the essentially communal dynamics of religious experiences. Hicks' conscious revelations in meetings for worship lived up to established "Friendly" patterns. He also spoke about issues that he believed were timely for each meeting he visited and that related to Quaker issues—plain dress and speech, slavery, pacifism, etc. White's visions were somewhat unusual for Millerites, but could be defended as a logical extension of their belief in emotional worship practices and the importance of prophecy. The content of her visions reflected Adventist concerns with discovering the correct interpretation of scripture and with living rightly in order to be taken to heaven when Christ returned.

Nevertheless, even though employing Taves' methodology uncovers the communal aspects of visions and revelations, debates among believers about them point back to James' proposition that religious experiences are ultimately isolated, individual

phenomena. Quakers regularly criticized Hicks' views of scripture. When he insisted on the validity of his beliefs because of his revelations, some accused him of arrogance, or even insanity. They could not accept his teachings, because they did not trust his claim to divine inspiration. Adventists similarly accused White of being self-seeking or diabolically influenced. They questioned whether they could really trust her visions, because they could only rely on her word. Despite their communal methods of evaluating visions and revelations, Adventists and Quakers could not completely circumvent their uncertainty about their leaders' visionary claims. Their skepticism demonstrates that they probably would have shared James' view of religious experiences.

In the end, both Hicksites and Adventists employed standards of evaluation that relate to both Taves' and James' methodologies. As Taves suggested, to a certain extent, these communities relied upon communal processes for judging the validity of their leaders' religious experiences. During his ministerial journeys, Hicks' revelations were subject to the scrutiny of the local meetings that he attended. As his interactions with Stephen Grellet showed, sometimes the community approved of his message, and sometimes they did not. The processes for evaluation, however, occurred mostly through accepted communal practices both within meetings for worship and outside those meetings, as when the Philadelphia elders attempted to discipline Hicks.[45] White's community had to create standards for evaluating her visions. In her case, her visions occurred first, and her husband and other members of the *Review & Herald* editorial board created theological justifications afterward.[46] Both Hicks' and White's supporters eventually chose to support them in part because they lived up to communal standards for behavior and belief.

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[45] See above pp. 81-82
[46] See above pp. 167ff

Nevertheless, Hicksite and Adventist standards for trusting their leaders' visions also demonstrate elements of James' theory for evaluating religious experiences—namely that religious experiences should be assessed based on their effects.[47] In addition to theological and other standards of evaluation, Hicksites and Adventists looked to see whether their leaders' experiences produced "good fruit."[48] Frequently Adventists reminded themselves and others that White's visions had had good results. For instance, skeptical W.H. Ball eventually concluded that people who rejected the visions fell into sin, leading him to ask: "It is a settled fact that the visions of sister White are from the Lord, or from the Devil. If from the latter, why does not the Lord bless any effort which may be made to prove them false?"[49] Despite all the theological acrobatics among Adventists to justify White's visions, for many of them, the best evidence of their validity were their good effects.

Critics of Hicks had worried, with some justification, that his emphasis on revelation would have negative results, creating disorder in the Society of Friends. To his opponents, then, even though they fervently disagreed with his theology, they were most concerned about the potential of his revelations to destroy their community.[50] Once the Separation had occurred, Hicksites did not necessarily think that it was unequivocally

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[47] James argued that people liked religious experiences "either because we take an immediate delight in them; or else…we believe them to bring us good consequential fruits for life." William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 14-15. I have used this same element of James' thinking to justify examining communal processes beyond the moment of transcription, which Taves focuses on. James, however, actually implies a meaning closer to the one that Hicksites and Adventists used: Good things happened as a result of the visions, so they could be trusted.

[48] Of course, James' pragmatism has biblical roots, which would have been the source of many Christians' approach to identifying genuine spiritual leadership. Matthew 7:15-20 cautions believers to "beware false prophets," saying that "by their fruits ye shall know them."

[49] W.H. Ball, "A Confession," James White et al, eds., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 19, no 23. (Battle Creek, MI: May 6, 1862), 179. See above pp. 190-191

[50] See above pp. 105-106

good, because of the communal divisions that occurred. Nevertheless, they also appealed to the idea that the long-term results of Hicks' revelations, and their belief in following revelation above all, would have good effects in the long run.[51]

Ultimately, applying Taves' emphasis on the communal aspects of religious experiences reveals the ways in which various communities, like the Hicksites and Seventh-day Adventists, sought to solve the problem of religious experiences' essential interiority.[52] What this suggests is that neither Taves' nor James' methodology adequately addresses the problem of studying religious experiences, but that the two depend on each other for a more complete picture of how religious experiences functioned in communities. Despite scholarly efforts to move beyond James' approach, the study of religious experiences may always come up against his observation of the remoteness of individual, psychological experiences. Nevertheless, by examining not only the processes by which these communities initially recorded their leaders' religious experiences, but by which they assessed and incorporated those experiences over time, we can see how communities addressed this problem and found solutions that enabled them to trust individual experiences enough to ground new communities and ways of living upon them.

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[51] See above pp. 109ff

[52] Of course, William James was not the first or the only American intellectual to suggest that revelations should apply only to the people who have those revelations. Thomas Paine, for instance, said that revelation applies "to the first person only," and is "heresy to every other, and consequently they are not obliged to believe it." Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*, Part I (New York: Peter Eckler Publisher, 1895), 8.

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church also sponsors free online archives of all of Ellen White's writings and the archives of the General Council. See:

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